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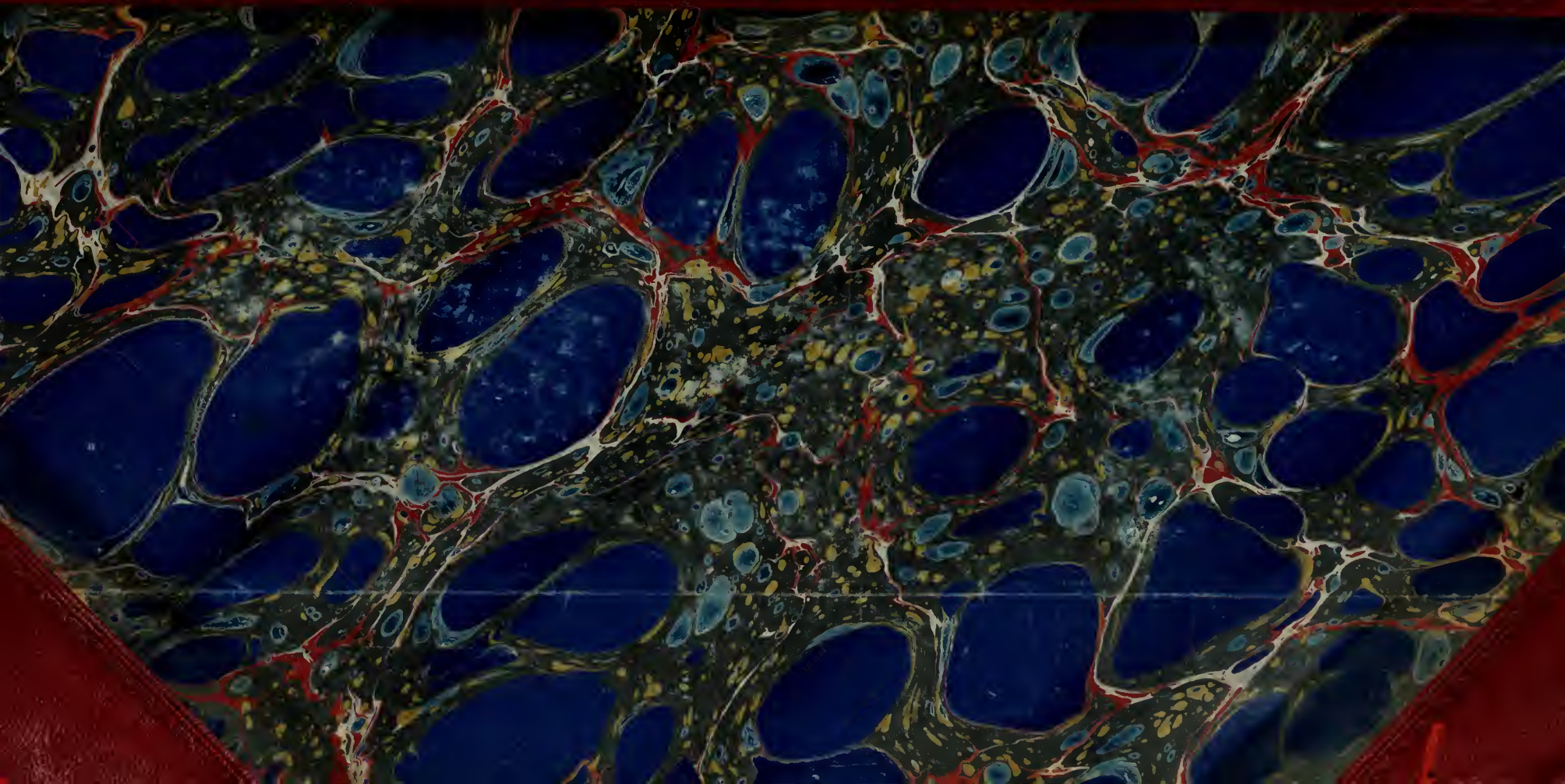

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M. L. GOW. J. SWAIN.

IT WAS A HARD STORY TO TELL.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XLII.

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By W. H. J. Boot and others.
To "Under Northern Skies."
To "In a House-Boat."
To "The Legend of Myddfai."
To "Domesday Book."

By William Small.
To "Through the Waters."

By M. Ellen Edwards.
To "Love's Ventures."

THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1886.

LADY VALERIA.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DAY OF STRANGE MEETINGS.

EDRIC walked silently beside Elsie as the chairman moved on again, waiting in some wonder for her next words. They did not come at once; the red spot died out of her cheeks and she began to glance up at him in her old frightened way. Perhaps there were too many listeners about for her to speak freely. The chairman guided her to a sheltered turn under the cliff where only a few invalids were sunning themselves on a distant bench.

"You have come down to see your brother, I suppose?" Edric asked at length.

"Yes, a kind friend offered to bring me here. I had never seen the sea before in my life," she answered, in the little breathless, disjointed way that she always fell into when addressing him.

"And what do you think of it?"

Elsie's eyes turned to the wide, flashing, foam-flecked expanse below them, but only for a second. "I have hardly dared to look at it. It frightens me, and I cannot sleep for listening to it. Besides—I have been so afraid of missing you—if you happened to be here——"

The slightest shade of disapproval crossed Edric's face, and his answer was not promptly forthcoming. Elsie felt the cloud and hurried to explain.

"I wanted to thank you again for your kindness to us all, and—and—I had something rather important to say."

"Wants to get her brother back again, I suppose," flashed through Edric's mind, but he only looked attention.

"I don't know how you may take it, sir, but I can't help it if you are angry. I must run the risk of that. You may guess how serious it is when I *can* risk displeasing you," she ended, impulsively.

"I am sure you can only mean well whatever you do. I am not

likely to be offended, I think," replied Edric, smiling kindly, touched as he always was by the soft, frightened manner and great pleading eyes, like those of some graceful wild creature that would come for a caress if it dared, shrinking and alluring, following and yet alert to fly if approached.

"You are sure? Not if I seem dreadfully impertinent and interfering?"

"Wants me to get Sampson made a corporal forthwith," decided he.

"Oh, Mr. Poynter, if you would only do what I ask you and go away!" was the unexpected sequel.

"Go away? Now? Oh, certainly. I beg your pardon for detaining you, but I understood you had something to say to me."

"Away from here. From the camp. From your regiment, I mean. Not for long, but till it is safe for you to return. I can't explain. I know how strange it must sound to you, but indeed, *indeed* I must ask it. What *can* I say to make you listen?"

She was in earnest, honest earnest, none but the most dense could have failed to see that. She was terrified out of her shyness and desperate at the want of sympathy in his face. He looked merely stern and perplexed, hardly curious.

The chairman had left them at a sign from her; the invalids had started on a stroll; they were alone together. She caught his hand in her tremulous hot fingers and held it in an eager beseeching clasp.

"Don't, *don't* go away without hearing me! I am telling the truth. There is mischief about. I cannot tell you how, but—save yourself! Oh, it is such a little thing I ask! A few days—just what you would give to some pleasure trip—and it is for your life—your life!"

She was sobbing now in an agony of impatience at his silence, and Edric, horribly bothered as he was, could not deal as severely and sensibly with her as the model young man with his wits and his principles always at hand and in good working order should have done. He, it is to be regretted, thought first of consoling the poor silly little girl, and then of the consequences.

"Don't cry," and he patted her shoulder affectionately with his spare hand. "Why, what can it matter to you what becomes of me next week or the week after? You dear, kind, ridiculous little woman! Now look up and tell me all about it. Why am I in greater danger than anyone else? than your brother, for instance?"

"I can't explain!" she cried, despairingly. "I knew how it would be. You are very good to listen to me at all, but I can tell you nothing more."

"Well, it doesn't matter, for as it happens I can't go. I *would* have gone—I really would, and asked no questions—if it would have made you happy," said the inconsiderate youth, "but I can't. It's a question of duty. I could not shirk *that*, Elsie, at a mere hint of danger."

"But it's your life—your *life* you risk in staying here——"

"That is no concern of mine. It's Her Majesty's property. Don't you know I'm going to be shot at in Egypt for six-and-eightpence a day, and I dare say shall come home safe and sound after all?"

It was rather a dreary pleasantry, but his mind was running on Euphrosyne's threat—or warning—taken in connection with Elsie's wild errand. What relation, he thought with sudden intuition, might not the one bear to the other? He would make it his business to find that out at once.

She had released his hand with a shudder when he spoke of Egypt. He guided the chair to a bench, and seating himself so as to bring himself more on a level with the pretty, woe-begone eyes that looked disconsolately at him, began impressively and authoritatively:

"Now listen to me, Elsie. I know you are expecting me to try and find out what made you think of coming to me with such an unreasonable request. It was not the sort of thing that would have occurred to you to do of your own idea, I am sure." She gave him a quick deprecating look and flushed hotly. He took her trembling fingers in his to reassure her and went on. "I know all about it. Yes, I do, quite well." He felt the fingers give a great twitch, and Elsie's eyes turned on him in dismay. "I know who sent you. There is only one person in the world who has the slightest interest in getting me out of this. I don't know her reason; no good one I'm convinced, but it's a strong one. Now I suspect it was this mutual friend of ours who has sent you here. Eh! Elsie? Don't you know her? A dark woman——" Here he stopped with an ill-timed fit of caution on the very verge of a description that Elsie must infallibly have recognised. "No; you describe your friend first."

"You are wrong! Altogether wrong!" declared Elsie, wide-eyed and emphatic. "No one has told me anything. No one."

"Then how did you come by the notion?" he persisted.

She drooped her head, murmured something confusedly, sighed, looked up piteously in his face. "If you *would* but believe me——"

"Let's make a bargain. You give me a reasonable explanation of all this, and I'll make one more attempt to get leave, though I warn you I shan't succeed. If you won't speak, there's an end of the matter."

"But I can't, there's where it is," she whispered, aggravatingly.

"Very good. There's an end of it, you see. Good-bye. I shall call your man now."

"Wait, wait! Oh dear, what shall I do? It's no use telling you—but if it's the only chance—I don't care if you laugh—if it only makes you mind," she went on disconnectedly. "It was a dream I had—only a dream," and she forced a laugh.

"Only a dream?" he echoed in kindly mockery.

"It was one night when I had been sitting up for father, I was

very tired and thought I should sleep directly, and so I did, but oh! the pain and weariness of such sleep. It was crowded with fragments of visions that I tried again and again to see clearly, and yet dreaded to see, for I knew they were terrible, every one. Black, rolling clouds full of dreadful shapes came closing in on me, and I was fighting them off with all my might when someone behind me called 'Open, and let the secret be made plain to her.' Then another voice replied 'What will befall is written—is written.' Then the clouds parted, and I saw before me the days of the weeks to come, one after the other sliding along like great globes of luminous light or rings of shining smoke with figures stirring in them. I could see myself looking out of every one, and other faces that I knew, and I counted till I came to to-day, and then I saw you."

"Not unlikely. You knew which day you were coming to Folkestone and were thinking about it."

She shook her head. "I had seen you in all the others, not as you look now, but in a red coat, or a dark blue one with braid, and gold on your cap. To-day you were standing looking as you did that night ——"

"Quite right. I shall wear mufti to-night. I am going to dine at the West Cliff with some people," he annotated. She shivered.

"And then over you fell a great black cloud—a pall. I knew it was, and it sank and hid you. Day after day passed and I looked for you, and still came only blackness, till seven days had gone, and then all else melted away and you were lying with a white sheet over you, and when I lifted it your dead eyes stared up at me, and through all was the sound of the sea!"

Her voice sank to a whisper of horror, her face grew as ghastly white as the vision that still held her imagination. Edric felt uncomfortable, though unbelieving.

"It's a coincidence," he said, "an unpleasant coincidence, that you and somebody else should have pitched upon this week as a bad time for me. Well, we can't tell what may be the worth of your warning till the week's over, can we? And then it won't be much use. Perhaps it means a wedding? Dreams go by contraries, you know. Was that all?"

Elsie shook her head.

"It came again," she went on, in the same low, awe-stricken tone; "the same again, and the third time I could bear it no longer and struggled with the shapes, and beat and crushed them with my hands, and fought till they rolled down before me in a glittering downfall of fragments. And I was holding one that suddenly grew warm and clasped my hand in return, and—and——" She stopped, then with an odd mixture of confusion and determination in her pretty face went on boldly: "It was *your* hand, just as you hold mine now. I saw it as plainly as I do now, and I dropped it—" here the parallel was

not complete—"and I felt it was a sign given to me that I might save you—if you *will* be saved!" And both Elsie's hands were laid imploringly on his.

"It isn't shown very clearly how you are to do it though. Suppose you have already done so without being aware of it? If I hadn't been gossiping here with you I might have come to grief up there perhaps. Slipped over the cliff, got bitten by a mad dog, lost my heart to some fair-haired fiend who would be the death of me in the third volume." Edric stopped to laugh, looking so cheery and confident and handsome that Elsie smiled too, a misty, tearful smile. "I'm not laughing at your visions. It was as right for you to act upon them as for me to disregard them, but that's all we can do. How long do you stay here?"

"Only till to-morrow," with a regretful sigh. Edric sighed too—with relief.

"Then we shan't meet again? So good-bye. Now *don't* begin to cry again, like a dear girl!"

She smiled obediently, looking so penitent and alarmed at his tone of vexation that he could but lift the little hand to his soft moustache. "I'll come and see you. I will indeed. Just to show you I'm all right."

"When?"

"Oh, I can't promise. Not for a week or so—let the dream have a chance of coming true."

"In a fortnight?"

"Yes, if it will make you happy. Good-bye, good-bye."

The bath-chairman was hanging over the railings in converse with a friend, well-content at the easy fashion in which his hourly wage was being earned. Edric sent him back to his duty, and was well-pleased to see that the little group of officers had scattered and that he had no questioning to fear on the subject of his prolonged interview.

He took a turn or two up and down the Lees, looked in at the club, went to three afternoon teas and back to Camp. He was devoured by an odd, restless wish that the day should come to an end. He wanted to get a night's sleep over before he began to think over its experiences. The dinner at the West Cliff seemed intolerably slow, the conversation unendurably heavy. There was an open-air concert in the hotel gardens. Some of the party strolled out to listen, and he among the number. But once there, the idea of spending another hour in the company of the people he had been meeting and talking to over and over again since mid-day grew too insupportable to be entertained, and with an abrupt farewell he departed.

He walked aimlessly down the town to the harbour and up again to the Lees. People were everywhere that night, out under the white glare of the broad July moon. On the pier, on the beach, on the Lees above,

all the place seemed alive with sauntering, chattering figures and their jet-black shadows. The windows of the houses facing the sea were mostly open, the gas inside looking faint and dim in the strong white brilliance. The distant sound of the music rose and fell like the surge of the sea, hardly more audible through the voices of the throng.

Edric leant against the railings idly watching, wondering whether it was anything in the full white light that fed the disquiet in his blood, whether a hard walk to Dover, a swim in the early grey dawn, and a tramp home in time for the start to the ranges mightn't be the surest sedative. A tall lady in old-fashioned, clinging skirts and huge, full sleeves, with a stupendous hat bowed under the weight of a forest of nodding plumes had stopped just in front of him. A pair of glasses glinted weirdly in the moonbeams from under the shadow of her hat brim. She looked up and down and around him, and at last got the glasses levelled full at him, and then advanced with a precipitous rush.

"You are Mr. Poynter from the Camp, aren't you? You don't know me, I think. I'm Lady Charles Brant, and I want to know if you will mind coming to see mamma for a few moments. She recognised you just now and sent me."

"With pleasure." Edric raised himself and lifted his hat. "Do I know your mother?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I suppose so. She is Lady Valeria Meynell."

CHAPTER XXV.

"FOR NE'ER WAS DREAM SO LIKE A WAKING."

"I DON'T think she *does* know you, either," Lady Charles went on, peering up at him, "for she asked me your name when we saw you pass this afternoon. Of course *I* ought to have known it, but then I couldn't tell it was *you*, or anybody else at that distance. It was confusing, wasn't it? She recognised you without knowing you, and I knew you and didn't recognise you, and we had to ask the landlord at last."

Edric had succeeded in recalling the occasion of his meeting Lady Charles. "You were at Mrs. Damien's, I think."

"The evening we did the septett! Of course. Would you believe it, we have never been able to get that up again!"

"What a pity!" (devoutly hoping she might not enquire if he knew "the septett" again when he heard it). "I have one of the performers in my company now, young Paramount. He enlisted the week after."

"What a sinful shame! Or no, perhaps it's lucky. You can send him down here now and then to practise. Won't you please order

him to come? We are doing the Mozart quintet now. The *Mozart!*" and her eyes gleamed through her glasses.

"Quite impossible, I'm afraid." Here to his relief they stopped at a large, handsome house, in the window of which sat a lady shrouded in a black lace shawl. She drew back hastily as they approached.

The room in which she sat was half lighted by a dim lamp, the only light by the time Edric entered, as she had hastily dropped a curtain shutting out the window and the moon-beams, and stood in the gloom to receive him: a tall, shadowy figure holding out a thin white hand.

"Thank you, Mabel; you may go," she said, in a soft, imperious tone, and the door shut behind Edric, who advanced in some embarrassment. Her hand closed on his with a clasp that made him shudder, the thin, shrivelled fingers burned and throbbed and clutched at his with such greedy haste, and her great sparkling eyes shone on him with such fierce enquiry.

Then he knew her, and stood on guard, expectant, mistrustful. She held him at arm's length without a word, gazing and gazing. Then a shivering sigh broke from her lips and she dropped her face in her hands. "So like and yet so unlike!" he heard her moan.

"Do you know why I sent for you?" she asked, looking up suddenly. "Did *you* never have any fancy about *me?* Oh, look at me. Look me in my face well. Tell me, have you never seen it before? Never in your dreams, long, long ago?"

She stepped forward to the table where the lamp stood, and lifting it, let its light fall full on her worn, majestic features, her deep, woeful eyes and quivering lips.

"I have seen you before," he began, hesitatingly, but it was not the answer she looked for. Her face clouded with bitter disappointment. She put down the lamp sharply.

"No, I could not expect it. Never mind. I have much more to say to you, and must lose no more time. I have so little, so little left to me now!"

She sat down on a sofa near and held out her hand to him, drawing him down beside her. He was utterly bewildered and filled with mistrust, and yet at the same time with deepest pity, and touched by the odd lingering tenderness of her voice and gaze. Something of this he must have shown ever so slightly, for a half smile dawned on her lips, the distressed lines of her brow relaxed, and she sighed again, this time in content as she sat still holding his hand.

"Would you stay with me," she said, gently, "if I were to ask you? Would you come and be a son to a poor, dying old woman, who has only been living on and on to meet you once more? I would make your life happy if money can do it. I would ask nothing in return, *nothing*. A kind word now and then and the sight of your face—will you give me so much?"

"Dear Lady Valeria, you cannot be in earnest. It's awfully good of you, but if I wished it ever so much I couldn't give myself away in that fashion, you know. I must stick to my profession, for one thing; and besides ——"

"What is there besides," she asked, in a sharp, clear tone. "Are you afraid I shall not make my promises good?"

"Besides, I don't exactly understand what you want me to do. I couldn't take money from you. It wouldn't seem at all a right thing to do—for me or for any man."

"It would be right if I wished it. I would give you my whole fortune in exchange for your love."

"There's where it is," demurred Edric, strong in his convictions, weak in his expression of them. "I should feel you were being swindled, if I were to pretend to accept your offer. Why, we are strangers, you and I, we know nothing of one another. I have been fancying that perhaps I am like someone you cared for once upon a time." She clutched his hand tighter, and he felt the trembling that seized her, and heard her breath catch with a sob. "Tell me anything else I can do to please you," he said, kindly, "and I'll do it, but you mustn't talk of money again."

She looked up at him in mute supplication, studying his kind, perplexed young face with her dark, yearning eyes, driving back the sobs and words that seemed ready to break from her lips, holding his hand still in a clasp that seemed as if it would never slacken.

"You will take nothing from me—nothing. Not my love? And you will give me nothing. Not a word of kindness, not a kiss. Oh, my boy, my boy! The sorrow falls, as he said it would, where the guilt lies. *I* must bear it to my grave, but you—*you* are happy? Prosperous? You have never known the want of love and care in your life?" She looked greedily for his assent at each pause. "That is justice—Heaven's justice. What am I that I should beg its mercy?"

She turned from Edric as she spoke, and he rose, loth to leave her, yet uncertain how far it was wise to prolong this strange scene. She rose too, calm now by comparison, her eyelids drooping wearily, her beautiful old lips curved piteously.

"You want to leave me now?" she asked, looking so wistful, so forlorn and shaken, that Edric's heart ached as he answered her.

"It is late. I have some way to go," and he involuntarily stretched out his arms fearing she would faint and fall. She sank into them and rested there lightly, her eyes closed, her lips very white. He kissed her forehead softly, once—twice. "Jack!" she whispered, and a smile flickered over her face. She raised her head and looked at him, still smiling. "I shall die now," she said, softly. "I have hoped and prayed for death for so long in vain, but now I feel the promise of its coming. You will not be sorry you have held me near your heart and kissed me, some day—when I am dead."

She disengaged herself gently and glided like a shadow away across the room and back to within the circle of lamplight almost immediately.

"I came here to find you. I knew we should meet, and I brought this with me to give you. Do not open this letter. It is for my son Oliver; you are to take it to him when you hear I am dead. This is for you. Wear it when you give the letter and always after. It will be yours by right." She opened a worn little red-leather case, and Edric glanced at a handsome signet ring inside for a second. "Do not look at it again till you put it on your finger for good. There; take them and bid me farewell."

Edric looked at the letter and case with strong repugnance, and made no movement to accept them. "May I not leave them here? Can you give them to your son to keep till—till—the proper time? I would rather not have charge of them."

"No, no, no," she repeated, more and more imperatively. "You must give the letter yourself—*yourself*, mind. No messenger will do. And it must be given unopened, mind that. Oliver is an honest, upright man, and will do his duty. I can trust him. He will understand how much I have spared him. I was not always willing to do so. There were times when I felt I must speak or go mad. I *did* speak once. You will find inside this the name of someone who knows my story. Someone that I once felt could have helped me. Go to him and ask him what I told him once, and tell him I have obeyed him. I have hated him—I could not bear to see him again ever since, but I have obeyed him. "Silence. Silence to the end," he said. "Go to him, but promise me, not till I am dead."

"I promise, though indeed the more you say to me the more I am sure you are making some terrible mistake. I'll keep your ring and your letter, and I'll ask no questions; that's what I have got to do, isn't it?"

Edric was beginning to feel the inevitable reaction from the long-strained excitement of the scene, the necessity for saying something brutally out-spoken, if need be, to put an end to this bewildering entanglement of half-confidences, but he was spared the necessity.

There was a sound of carriage-wheels outside, a ring at the bell, voices in the hall. She held up her hand for him to listen.

"That is my son Oliver's voice. Come, you shall meet him, that you may know him and that he may know you."

She beckoned him to the door of the room and flung it open, standing side by side with Edric, in the full light of the hall, her hand laid on his arm.

Lady Charles Brant was outside, standing on the lowest step of the staircase, her head tossed back indignantly, with an air of being called to account for something, and resenting it. A gentleman in travelling garb was speaking frowningly to her, but he stopped abruptly as the door opened, and turned round curiously.

Edric felt angry and awkward, and determined to bring the situation to a close at once. Without waiting for an introduction to Mr. Meynell, he crossed to Lady Charles and bade her good-night, and then returned to Lady Valeria.

"Good-bye. Do you really insist on my taking this?" He held out the letter and case, but she drew back and he had no choice but to retain them. Her hand touched his for the last time. It was chill as death. Her lips moved without sound. She bowed her head stiffly. Then he right willingly crossed the threshold into the free air once more.

The moon was sinking into a hazy bank of clouds, and the loiterers on the Lees were fast dispersing as he started off towards Shorncliffe at his best pace, feeling somewhat as if he had been dreaming some dream a hundred years long, and that it was about time to wake up and make an end of it.

It was becoming oppressive. His head ached with confused memories. Elsie's warnings, Lady Valeria's strange, passionate words, what did they both mean? Where should he find the explanation, and the link between them that he dimly felt existed?

Euphrosyne! Someone had surely spoken the name close at his ear, so distinctly it fell on his sense.

Euphrosyne. That was the answer. Despite Elsie's disavowal, it was she who had sent her he believed. It was she who knew he would meet Lady Valeria and desired to prevent it. Why? What did it all mean, this blindfold game of fast and loose? He was getting too weary to think. He was of a straightforward, unimaginative nature. The mystery and romance of the situation had no charms for him, while he felt the burden of doubt and secrecy to be physically exhausting almost.

How long the winding white road seemed in that faint light. How still and how lonely. He wished he had had the sense to go back to the hotel and drive home with Carroll. He must walk more, though, for the future. He was getting out of condition. Nervous, too; or why should he be hag-ridden by the recollection of that inscrutable figure with its wicked eyes gleaming at him out of the white face. Why should he keep fancying that he had seen it quite lately—that he had passed her while he was too busy listening to Lady Charles to recognise her, and his perceptions only retained a dim echo of the impression?

If she were to appear now! To rise suddenly from the shadow of that hedge, black against the white ground, her dusky finger pointed straight at the secret concealed in his breast. He involuntarily stopped to make sure of the safety of his charge, and pressed onwards and upwards more rapidly.

Out on the hill top at last, where Shorncliffe lay silent and sleeping under the dying moonlight. There were the garrison police on their rounds. He looked at them with quite a novel respect and sense of

security. There were lights still in the Royal Denbigh's mess, sounds of voices and glimpses of scarlet and gold figures picturesquely embowered in Dalyell's cherished vegetation, with tobacco vapour enough to cause the last of the Aphides to give up the ghost incontinently.

Edric paused before going on to his hut, but weariness and a dread of question and remark carried the point, and he went his way to his own quarters. Dalyell, who occupied the other half of the hut, was manifestly still absent, and Edric hesitated to enter. The flapping white blind in Dalyell's open window startled him. The passage between the rooms looked dark and like a pitfall: though he knew well that by daylight there was nothing worse to be seen there than his own spare table and a furniture case or two. It was his nerves he told himself that were all unstrung and playing him tricks. What else could persuade him that a dark figure drew back further into the dark, and that he had seen a hand rest for a second on the edge of that table just as he struck a cigar-light and looked about him.

He let himself into his room and lighted the candles, all of them, and his reading-lamp as well. Then he searched the place thoroughly, half-ashamed of himself as he did so. Everything was exactly as he was accustomed to find it. Then he set about discovering the safest place of deposit for his letter and ring. His chest of drawers had an arrangement for writing; a desk that pulled out and closed with a patent lock. He cleared it of everything and placed Lady Valeria's deposit therein, then locked it securely.

"Suppose I lose that key, or let it get stolen!" he thought; "and someone else gets hold of it. I know what I'll do, I'll sink it in the sea—or better, get a hammer and smash it to-morrow, and whenever the letter is wanted I'll burst the drawer open."

He put it under his pillow, and, with a feeling of being rather ridiculous, took his revolver from its case, examined and loaded it carefully and placed it within reach of his hand, and making a rapid operation of undressing, at last plunged into bed in search of the restful, dreamless sleep he was longing for.

It would not come. Weary as his tired eyes were, they refused to close. What prevented them? Why should he keep counting the folds into which that curtain fell between his room and the next? Why should he fancy that ever and again the edge drew softly aside as if someone were about to enter and then retreated. Why, it was too dark to make out anything except the forms that he knew by heart; his coat and cap on a hook, on the opposite wall, sword and belt on another, uniform neatly brushed and folded on the chair beneath, and on the other side of the doorway the oak-framed photograph of the Cathedral and the smaller one of the Deanery, his old home, below it. That was all, for the light he had left burning out on the dressing-table had gutted down and was spluttering to its evil-smelling end. He watched the sparks lazily, too lazily to get up and extinguish them, or light another candle—watched them till they

changed to fiery stars like Elsie's dream and rolled away into darkness, "leaving me lying here, just as she said," he murmured, drowsily. One was left. No. From a spark it had grown into the lighthouse on the end of the pier, and the waves were rising with a soft surge and rustle that filled the room. He would throw the key in now; but do what he would it floated, always just out of reach of his hand. Iron *did* float. He was in the midst of a hot argument with Dalyell on the subject when he found himself awake saying conclusively: "What about Ironclads?" and laughed aloud. Dalyell's musk could it have been that he had been dreaming of, or the scent—the evil, sickly-sweet scent—that still clung to his fingers? Was it this morning? He had closed his eyes again, indignant with himself for awaking. From the dark there shone out on him a thousand silver stars in an instant—they were the glinting of Lady Charles's glasses—they were eyes—shining eyes—every one of them, and Euphrosyne's! It was her heavy black mantle, not the darkness that lay across his face and was smothering him. He *would* wake. He must! He gave a struggle and a choking cry, and that moment sank off fast and sound in blissful unconsciousness. The black robe drifted away into the soft, dark, swelling tide, a strong grip held him up as he was borne along. He would be cast up on the sands soon—at Hester's feet—and here sleep came in good earnest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW EDRIC CAME TO SEAGRAVE PLACE.

Season in, season out, Seagrave Place wore the same aspect of gloomy seclusion. No coquetteries of floral balcony decoration ever could brighten it in summer, so no shut up windows and neglected doorsteps could add a shade to its gloom in winter. So profound its solemn quiet that the knock of an ordinary caller seemed to reverberate from end to end, and made the one solitary passer-by look up to see who had delivered it.

The passer-by was Eustace Stannard, the house that he involuntarily turned to look at was Lady Valeria Meynell's, and the visitor waiting on the steps was, as he recognised directly, "Mrs. Damien's friend, who followed her to St. Fridolin's that day. Poor fellow, how wretchedly ill he looks. I wonder if he has had any news of her."

Edric likewise recognised "the Vicar, that good-looking fellow," and returned his hasty greeting. His mind was too full of his own affairs to have energy left to detest the sight of him, as he had done on their first meeting. He had hardly room for a passing thought of Mrs. Damien just then. Then the door opened.

"Not at home," pronounced the butler, decisively, before the first words of his enquiry had passed his lips.

"I have come on very important business, and I think if you take

my card to your mistress she will see me directly," said Edric, ignoring the social fiction.

"It is of no use, sir. My lady won't see anybody." The man looked injured, as if he had just been going over all the ground before that day.

"She has returned from Folkestone, I know," Edric persisted, wondering if a sovereign would clear the way for him. The butler read his thoughts, but he had a conscience.

"I really can't help it, sir," he said, deprecatingly. "My lady is very ill and can on no account be disturbed. I'm sure I'd gladly do anything in *my* power," he added, in the forlorn hope that Edric might possibly take the will for the deed.

"Can I see Mr. Meynell?" after a moment's pondering.

"I don't know, sir. You'd better enquire in the City," making a sudden desperate attempt to rid himself of the pertinacious intruder as a gentleman emerged from the gloom of the hall within.

He bestowed a withering glance on the butler, who stood aside resigned to fate, and advanced with a look of sour dignity to dispose himself of Edric, who held obstinate possession of the doormat.

"Lady Valeria Meynell is quite unequal to receiving visitors to-day," he announced, stiffly, giving no invitation to enter.

"Can you tell me *when* she will be able to see me? It is on a very serious matter that I have to speak to her," Edric asked, recognising the gentleman he had met at Folkestone ("my son Oliver," she had called him). Mr. Meynell recognised him too, and with no friendly sentiments.

"I am sorry to say I cannot," he replied, stiffly.

"I should like to send her a note or message—if I knew what to say."

The butler disappeared at a sign from his master, who stood grimly and discouragingly attentive while Edric extracted a pencil and began a few words on the back of his card, crossed them out, looked blankly at the banker, tried again and gave it up.

"I don't quite see how to put it. Perhaps I had better get *you* to give a message. Lady Valeria asked me to do something for her, and I can't; that's all. If she will see me I'll explain why."

The look on Mr. Meynell's face of suspicious disfavour grew darker, but he only bowed gravely.

"You'll be sure to give it?" Edric asked, as he moved off.

Mr. Meynell's mouth twitched impatiently. "I—ah—I must beg that you will leave it to my discretion. I cannot promise."

"But it's serious. It's *uncommonly* serious. If you won't promise I shall have to get her told some other way. Of course if she's too ill—but that makes it all the more serious."

"I think you may trust me to do the best I can for my mother," Mr. Meynell spoke in grave rebuke. "Good-day."

"Good afternoon," responded Edric, rather sheepishly. "Of course you'll choose the best opportunity. And you'll write to me, won't you?" The heavy door closed softly on him, and without further answer he departed.

Mr. Meynell picked up from the floor the card on which Edric had begun his futile pencillings and, tearing it to bits, dropped it into his waste-paper basket; unconscious that the offending butler had not only received a previous one from Edric, but had been incautious enough to leave it on the great bronze card tray: where Lady Valeria's maid, peering idly about half-an-hour later, espied it, wondered at it, and ended by carrying it up with the next delivery of letters to her mistress's room.

Edric was too much absorbed in considering what he had better have said or left unsaid to notice that Mr. Stannard, returning from his errand or visit, was hastening to meet him, till they met face to face.

Something in Edric's harassed, dejected air struck Eustace even more forcibly on a nearer view. "You have been to the Meynells', I see; can you tell me anything of Lady Valeria?"

"She's ill; too ill to see anyone, so they say. She didn't seem so bad when I saw her at Folkestone not a week ago——" then he checked himself abruptly. "Are you a friend of hers?" he looked up at the Vicar with a sudden idea. "Do you think *you* could get to see her? I've a fancy that it is Mr. Meynell's doing that I'm not admitted."

"I can try. I think I ought to do so."

"Then would you mind saying to her that you saw me here."

"That I saw you here? Is that all?" looking slightly surprised.

"And that she can ask her son what I came for. That will do the business, I fancy."

Eustace accepted the mysterious commission without further enquiry, and they parted.

"It was a chance," Edric said to himself. "I'm glad I took it. If she's really bad, I musn't write agitating letters, and I daren't speak out to her son; not just yet. Well, I've done all I know, though bad's the best! And now—*now* I'll be off and put the case from beginning to end before Miss Archdale before I'm an hour older!"

It was a curious fact that though from the first day of his meeting with Euphrosyne he had been possessed with such a dread of being made a sort of link between her and Mrs. Damien as to make him almost fear to think of one in the other's presence, he had no such misgivings on Hester's behalf. Now, with Euphrosyne drawing her magic circles closer and closer round him, his love seemed to be a thing to hide away fathoms deep, as men bury their treasure at the coming of an enemy, to be drawn forth bright and precious as ever

when the troublous times are over. But as for Hester, his faith in her was strong against the wickedest witch that ever wove a spell. She was perfectly able to take care of herself and, on a pinch, of him too.

There was a sense of security, a promise of help and enlightenment in the very air of her neighbourhood, he thought, as he ran lightly up the steps of the Gloucester Road Station and made his way to Sir John's.

The big, old-fashioned barouche was in waiting at the door, he perceived, and hastened his steps. Lady Archdale's plumy bonnet was nodding inside, and the horses were stamping and tossing their heads impatiently. Hester was standing on the doorstep, racquet in hand, adjusting her long chamois leather glove, waiting to see her parents depart before crossing to the square gardens; and Sir John was trotting in and out in chase of a dozen after-thoughts, with constant appeals to "Hetty" and parenthetic apologies to his wife.

"Then remember, when Rigsby's cart calls that case is to go back. Really very sorry to detain you, Amelia! It's all that old fool Markham's doing. *Why* he should have made a point of being out of the way just this minute ——"

"You sent him yourself, dad. Told him to take Roswal out of the way. *I'll* see to your letters going all right."

"Very good, very good. You're going to play tennis with Jock and Fraulein, eh?"

"Only till Mrs. Holder comes for me. She's so uncertain it's a pity to waste the whole afternoon waiting for her."

Miss Hester was in her white tennis flannels with gay red skirts, and a red-lined hat on her pretty brown head. She looked as bright and fresh and sweet as a carnation, Edric thought, as he hurried up to make his presence known.

"Ha, Poynter, is that you?" cried Sir John. "Heard the news, eh? Let me introduce you to Lady Archdale. Amelia, Mr. Poynter, son of a very old friend of mine. No, he isn't, either. I'm always forgetting."

Lady Archdale bowed with prim graciousness, then beckoned Hester to her before Edric could do more than interchange a bow.

"Hester. You had better go at once to Mrs. Holder's. Now."

"Why, mother! Eunice is sure not to be ready."

"Never mind. I wish it."

Hester gave a resigned little pout and shrug of her shoulders, and tripped back to the house to deposit racquet and shoes. Edric followed her with his eyes, only giving half an ear to Sir John's important news.

"Only heard it myself for certain yesterday. I went to the Horse Guards ——" Here Hester tripped out again, and the rest was lost.

"You'll get the orders directly, you may rely upon it."

"Oh, just so; Egypt. Yes, I suppose so," said Edric, vaguely. He had been hearing nothing else for the last three months, so was not as impressed as Sir John expected. Besides, just then Hester, in obedience to another murmured order from her mother, gave him a farewell bow and smile, and he was too much concerned at the sight of her retreating figure to attend to anything else.

Sir John noted his blank looks and frowned. "Why, you don't look half-pleased. *I* should have thrown up my hat and bolted off to order my outfit if I'd been you! But I suppose you young fellows think it the thing not to excite yourselves about such trifles now-a-days." And with a shade less of his wonted cordiality Sir John got into the carriage and nodded adieu.

"I hope there's nothing wrong with that boy," he grumbled. "Looks seedy and dissipated—or not that exactly, either. Didn't cheer up as a man ought to do at the prospect of fighting. I like him too; don't you, Amelia? I wish I hadn't seen him give that down look." And the good old General fell into a brown study.

"I wonder where Hester is?" Lady Archdale exclaimed in a tremor. "Can he possibly overtake her? Ought we to stop? She would think nothing of speaking to him, even if I wasn't there! Girls have no sense of reserve now-a-days. Do stop, John!"

"All right!" answered Sir John, who was used to his wife's flutterings; "she's safe enough. Out of sight, by this time. Now if that fellow doesn't drive faster I shan't meet Brabant at the club by four." And the carriage rolled on unchecked.

Hester's notions of modest reserve were as strict in their way as her mother's. She had no intention of going one single step out of her way to meet Edric, though she was as sure as of the sun in heaven that he had need of her, and his look of chagrin at her departure had gone to her heart. But Edric's ally was at hand.

Roswal had been sent out for exercise ten minutes previously, in the hope that for once the carriage might be allowed to start without the square being rendered hideous by his expostulations. He had decorously accompanied Markham for the length of two streets, and then without warning set off north north-east, south and so by west home again, just to see that no treachery was intended him; entering Bellingham Square by one corner before Markham arrived by the direct road at another. He bestowed a plunge and bark of recognition on Edric in passing, and tore onwards to the house, disappearing down the area. Back again, finding himself betrayed and everybody gone out without him. Over the railings of the Square at a bound and on to the tennis court. Nobody there but Jock and the German governess, whom he respected but did not admire. So with another mighty bound he emerged and executed a ferocious war dance and song round Edric as if it were *his* fault.

"Find her, old boy," said Edric, entreatingly, "like a blessed old Cuss as you are, and I'll love you for ever."

Roswal paused at this appeal to his understanding and mentally ran over the names of Hester's wonted haunts. He sniffed the air, then the ground, made a few tentative excursions to various corners, and at last, with a sudden joyous fling of his nose aloft, and a sharp bark of triumph, started off at a steady trot, Edric at his heels.

It was only to the next street after all, where at one of the doors stood a low pony carriage with a young lady in a red-lined hat inside. Roswal leapt in on her, causing an utter downfall of the white umbrella, easel, sketching stool, and other artistic paraphernalia with which the front seat had been piled. Hester started, blushed, greeted Roswal and scolded Edric in her confusion. "You wretch, how *did* you find me out! No, I don't mean you, Mr. Poynter;" and then they both laughed heartily and joined in re-establishing order, while a pretty woman in a cotton gown, with a white veil twisted round her straw hat stood looking at them in silence.

"Mr. Poynter!" she said at length, holding out her hand. "So you have found your way here at last."

Edric recognised a lady whom he had met and forgotten once or twice in his life time. "I was not exactly coming to call," he admitted.

"No, you know I don't want visitors in decent weather. Now, Hester, let's be off; the light will be lovely for the next two hours." And Mrs. Holder, who seemed in a desperate hurry, jumped in and took the reins.

"Roswal must come," said Hester.

"Of course, and Mr. Poynter, too, if he likes to pay his call there. He won't interrupt us much." The last words of this concession being inaudible in the roll of wheels and clatter of ponies' feet.

"Bring him!" Edric heard Hester call.

"Where to, I wonder?" thought Edric in some amusement at the eccentricity of the whole proceeding. He followed gaily, to the satisfaction of Roswal, who covered some score of miles in his frantic endeavours to divide his attention between him and the occupants of the fast retreating carriage. Finally he attached himself to Edric and brought him safely to Kensington Gardens.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN KENSINGTON GARDENS AGAIN.

Edric paused with sudden distaste. It was the first time he had been there since the ill-omened day of his meeting with Euphrosyne, and he wished chance had brought him anywhere else. Roswal interpreted the stop to mean mistrust, and shot off like an arrow, returning before Edric had advanced many paces with a satisfied expression. "I knew I was right! They are here safe enough," it said.

So past the Round Pond and down the horse chestnut avenue Edric took his slow and reluctant way. What fatality was drawing him to that spot again? A superstitious thrill ran through him. The shadow of a tall, black-robed figure seemed to cross his path. He was close to the seat, he thought, where the gloom of her presence first fell on him. There it was, and now ——

The sunshine glinted gaily on a white dress with gay red skirts, and a tiny shoe holding a red-stockinged foot. Hester's eyes and Hester's smile met him in welcome from the very corner where Euphrosyne had crouched, dark and silently watchful, while he played fast and loose with his destiny.

Some distance off, across the grass, he could see the white umbrella, with Mrs. Holder under it busy with a study of trees and slanting sunshine. Hester was at work too, and Edric, even in his pre-occupation, stopped to notice the dainty bend of her head and the pretty poise of her hand as she glanced up from her sketch-book at a little group before her; two tiny children, released from their respective perambulators, solemnly propping up each other's wavering equilibrium, with great, grave eyes and mouths puckered with anxiety.

"To think of my finding you *here*," Edric exclaimed, taking the seat next her. "Here, of all places, where my troubles all began. And now I have come to ask you to help me out of the tangle—if there *is* a way out."

"There generally is to most tangles, and you generally come out of them at the very point where you went in. It is a good omen."

"I hope so—and yet I don't know what business I have to come and inflict my perplexities upon you, Miss Archdale, except that I have no one else, and I don't know a creature in the world whose opinion I'd take before yours."

Hester secretly applauded his discrimination, but she only said rather primly: "Have you no intimate friend in the regiment? Or my father would be a better adviser than I, perhaps."

"Just so," catching eagerly at the suggestion; "but I want *you* to tell me first whether I *ought* to bother Sir John about the affair. I don't know whether it's a matter on which I ought to consult anybody. My own head isn't clever enough to deal with it. I feel like a Guy Fawkes that has lost his way, and doesn't know whether it's coals or gunpowder he will poke his candle into next."

Hester smiled encouragement, giving, as she listened, absent touches to the little pencil sketches that dotted the page of her book. Edric began, awkwardly enough, to tell what had befallen him since their last meeting.

It was a hard story to tell, and Edric was not fluent by nature; besides, he was embarrassed by a fear of saying too much. He stopped short.

"I'm making it all sound ridiculous, I know. You'll say she was merely a crack-brained old woman, and laugh at her, and I don't want

you to do that. I am sorrier for her than I can tell. She's under some fearful delusion I feel sure, but somehow I couldn't get her told. I tried to stop her and explain things, but it was no use."

"It isn't possible that she has some real interest in you?" asked Hester, deep in thought.

"Do you mean—is she a long-lost grandmother or anything in that way? Well, scarcely I'm one of half-a-dozen boys, and I've never heard of Laurie or Jim being haunted in this fashion. Besides, I think I know our family by heart; we are a clannish lot."

Hester shivered uneasily. "It all sounds like a snare of some sort. You are sure the other—Madame Euphrosyne—was not in the background somewhere?"

"Not that I saw."

"And the old lady is respectable?"

"Unimpeachably so, as you would say if you heard who she is."

"And nothing more was said about your friend, Mr. Monk?"

"Not a syllable."

"What can it all mean? I suppose she's mad, but I wish you hadn't taken those things. Can't you see her again and insist on a clear understanding, and if she won't have one give them back again?"

"I wish to heaven I could!" was his fervent response; "but that's just what I cannot do now. They're gone."

"Gone! How? When?"

"That same night. I only wish I knew how. I got back to Camp dog-tired, but I made them safe enough before I went to bed. Locked them in my writing-drawer, and put the key under my pillow. I had an early start to the ranges before me next morning and meant to wake at reveillé but overslept myself and had to get off in a scramble without breakfast. I had the key with me fast enough—here it is—and directly I got back took a look into the place. Empty! I declare, Miss Archdale, I felt as if my wits were going! I had to sit down and think hard for some time before I could be sure that I hadn't dreamt the whole thing. Sometimes I begin to wonder now if that's not possible. Suppose I had been a little off my head that night?"

Edric's forehead contracted painfully, and a queer, uncertain look came into his eyes. Hester watching him keenly, read the traces of the strain his strong young nature had undergone, and instinctively guessed the relief this confidence must be to him.

"Tell me what you did next," she demanded. "Went off to Folkestone with the story at once?"

"Just what I did, after I had examined about a dozen writing-drawers and locks and about two hundred keys. No one has anything like mine—drawer or key, and the armourer says it's impossible the lock can have been picked. Besides, when could it have been done? The police saw no one suspicious about that night, and

Dalyell—in the same hut—says he came in late and sat up half the night, but heard no stir in my room."

"And at Folkestone you found ——?"

"Nothing! The lady had left that morning for town, though the rooms had been taken till the end of the week."

"You got her town address?"

"And have been there, with the same result. She is too ill to see anyone, and there the matter ends. Ought I to go to Scotland Yard, or would that be the last thing the poor lady would wish? Help me, Miss Archdale. What must I do?"

He drew a long breath of relief as he asked the question, and saw her bright little face grow intent on thinking out his answer.

"Have you told me everything?" she asked, slowly, considering as she spoke. "I don't mean the lady's name—I would rather not hear it—but *is* there no suspicion of that other woman's hand being in this?"

Now Edric had been far from intending that Hester or anyone should hear of the warnings he had received; and, indeed, had been doing his utmost to forget them himself ever since, but there was no resisting the inquisitorial gaze of Hester's dark eyes, if, indeed, he had not felt convinced that she knew quite well that some suppression of truth was intended. So he flung his last remaining scruple overboard and told of Euphrosyne's letter; and, as a natural consequence, of the appeal from Elsie that had followed it up. Miss Hester's pretty, fine eyebrows drew together in slight displeasure, though it is to be feared many details of the interview were omitted.

"Elsie Paramount! Rather an impertinent piece of officiousness on her part. What could *she* have to say to you?"

Edric explained, but Hester's disapproval remained unabated.

"What fanciful nonsense! It's very kind of you to take so much interest in her and her brother, but I think you and Rose and Mr. Stannard are turning the poor child's head amongst you," and with a tiny toss of her own she dismissed that part of the subject and fell to pondering on the rest.

"It's very irrational and feminine to feel sure of anything without a reason, is it not?" she said at last, "but that's just what I am. I am quite sure that Euphrosyne has got your letter and ring."

Edric's eyes flashed at her excitedly. "Then I am not a monomaniac! I know she has them! I can't tell why, but it has been running in my head ever since without rhyme or reason. I feel just like Carroll when he jumps up, upsets half the furniture and goes for something with the poker. It's sure to be a cat; but neither you nor he nor anyone else can tell how he knew it was there. 'It gives him creeps,' he says, and I've found out the sensation exactly. But if you are sure, too, that makes gospel truth of it."

Hester nodded. "See here," and she began to tell off her points on her finger-tips, "we are not so devoid of argument as I fancied.

Euphrosyne and your lady were in concert at first. Now they are apart, and she has a reason for preventing your meeting. Suppose she doesn't want you to receive that letter. How do we know what's in it? Something damaging to her, most likely. Anyhow, you have met despite her, and the only resource is to steal it, which she succeeds in doing—shall we say—aided by the good offices of that young scamp, Sam Paramount."

"No," spoke Edric, positively, "that won't do. You must give up Paramount as a fellow-conspirator. It isn't in him."

"Very well," she agreed, good-humouredly, "but it's a pity. It fitted my scheme of things so admirably. Of course she would have had to square him first. And equally of course he might have let Elsie into the secret to some extent, which would amply account for dreams and previsions. However, there's nothing so dangerous as a too perfect theory; so mine may go."

"Then you think it is still her doing that I am not allowed to see Lady Valeria?" asked Edric, incautiously; "or Mr. Meynell's?"

Hester put up both her hands to her ears with a look of dismay. "Lady Valeria Meynell," she cried. "Oh! I couldn't help hearing, but I'll never let the name pass my lips. What can it all mean? Stop!" and she checked his next words with an imperative little upraised hand. "I have an idea." He held his peace while the thought seemed to dawn and grow luminous in the brown depths of her eyes, and then she smiled at him outright in triumph.

"Why, I believe I can help you myself, just a little! I have a friend in the very house, Mabel Brant. I have been with Rose to Seagrave Place to call on her, though I had forgotten all about it till this minute. At any rate I know her well enough to go again. I am sure that she will help you to see her mother if I tell her the need. May I? Can you trust me to say just enough and no more?"

"Trust you! I only wish you had the telling of the whole story!'

"*Do* you? *Would* you? Ought I? Isn't it too much of an interference in any person's affairs? I know what mother would say, bu I never know how far she's right and I've no one else to ask," cried Hester, distracted between quick terror of overstepping the bounds of rightful discretion and the keen sense of power that was tingling through her to the finger-tips that were burning to dip themselves into this mysterious pie.

"I don't know myself," Edric answered, his sensitiveness aroused on her behalf. "You've been awfully kind to me, and I'm afraid I have presumed on it a little. If you were my sister, or—or—my solicitor, I should like nothing better than to throw myself and my affairs into your hands to be dealt with as you should choose. As it is, I think you've done as much for me as I have any right to ask. We might trust to the chapter of accidents now."

"I wish you had done so from the first," she exclaimed, impetuously, blushing hotly as she spoke. "This is the second time you

have made me feel intolerably presumptuous and meddlesome. I've been spoilt with people perpetually coming to me with their troubles for help or advice. I've grown so conceited that wherever I see a difficulty I feel that it's my business to make an end of it. I want to manage everything and everybody. Mamma says it's my besetting sin, but I never believed her before! I see it now, and how detestable and unladylike I must seem."

Hester sprang from her seat as she poured forth this railing accusation against herself, with angry tears rising to her eyes and bright indignant glances at Edric, who rose too, altogether confounded and distressed. If he had argued with her, or attempted to sooth her, the poor little maiden's suddenly awakened pride and self-mistrust might have pricked her into some sharp reply, but blundering as he considered himself, he knew better than to attempt to do either, and only stood with a deprecating, utterly uncomprehending air till she stopped speaking.

"I beg your pardon," he said, earnestly, "I had no idea I had ever offended you before. What a dense dog I must be to cut my own throat in this fashion. Offend *you?* I couldn't do it even unintentionally. Only tell me what I said or did."

She burst into a hearty laugh, as sudden and unexpected as her anger. "What a vixen you must think me! Couldn't you see that it was myself I was scolding? When you gently suggested that I was neither your sister nor your solicitor it gave me a sort of shock to find how I had fallen into my old tricks of lecturing and dictating, and how meekly you must have been submitting to me."

"I didn't mean solicitor, I assure you; the word slipped in in place of a better."

"Suppose we drop the subject and go to Eunice now." And Hester smoothing her ruffled plumage, so to speak, picked up her sketch book and stepped demurely by his side across the grass to the white umbrella. Circumnavigating it they found Mrs. Holder with intent face and rapid brush running a race with the sun, catching the changing criss-cross shadows on the grass down a vista of lambent green light and flickering leaves. She wasted no side-glance on the new comers, and Edric stood embarrassed for a second.

"Eunice! It's time to stop. Mr. Poynter can't stay here for ever on the chance of your speaking to him," interrupted Hester, cruelly indifferent to the sudden shimmer of pearly light on the satin bark of a beech tree that brought out the very effect her friend had been waiting for for weeks.

"Um!" responded Mrs. Holder, brush in mouth.

"I hope Mr. Holder and the boys are well," he ventured.

"Eh—h?" mixing something in frantic haste.

"That's all you'll get till I put down the umbrella and shut up her paint box presently," laughed Hester, "so you needn't wait."

He did wait though, for a sunny half hour longer, turning over

Hester's book and discussing her studies for her next picture, and everything else besides under Heaven.

"Those babies were the very models I wanted for a mediæval child wedding, in some dim, splendid old Cathedral—an Italian one, I think."

Edric could have lounged on the grass all day listening to her musical chatter, and watching the deft, brown fingers as they pencilled little illustrative out-lines as her fancies required; but time was fleeting, and it was necessary to recall Mrs. Holder from the world of Art, which act Hester performed in her own determined fashion.

"Is that you, Mr. Poynter! Have you been long here?" she asked, briskly, rapidly packing up her tools as she talked. "I thought I heard Hester talking to someone. Come home and have some tea? No? Well then, Hester, we must make haste; I believe I've asked a lot of people for this afternoon. Was it for music? No! It was to meet Mr. Van Cruisens and see his Canadian sketches. Good gracious!"

They hurried in a party to find the carriage, and Edric only secured one moment for the last words which he could not venture on sooner. "Then I am quite forgiven, Miss Hester?"

"Of course, of course," she said, hurrying on. "Please don't say any more about it."

"Then if you *really* have brought yourself to overlook my unhappy remark, and if Lady Charles Brant *should* be able to help us——"

"What then?" asked Hester, half smiling.

"Don't you think *you* could put my case before Lady Valeria a thousand times better than I should?" And the crafty youth drew a long breath at the extent of his own audacity.

"I'm not your sister or your solicitor, Mr. Poynter," with lofty disdain. Then melting: "But it's just what I should dearly love to do. It seems so hateful to go on at cross purposes when a word of explanation may set things straight once for all. Trust me. I'll see your old lady and tell her you are a friend of mine and how you have lost her ring and letter. Anybody might do that—might they not?"

"Certainly. The most casual of acquaintances."

"Then if she wants to see you she can arrange it, and you'll tell her all the rest."

"Right joyfully, though I'm not proud of my own share in the story."

"Good-bye. You may trust to me. If you and I and Lady Valeria are alive we shall have made an end of the mystery before the week is out."

(*To be continued.*)

SHRIMPS AND PRAWNS.

By the Rev. J. G. Wood, M.A.

"I chanced at breakfast the other day to wish I knew something of the biography of a shrimp, the rather that I was under the impression of having seen jumping shrimps on a sandy shore express great satisfaction in their life.

"My shelves are loaded with books on natural history, but I could find nothing about shrimps except that 'they swim in the water, or lie upon the sand in shoals, and are taken in multitudes for the table.'"—J. Ruskin.

SO says Mr. Ruskin at the conclusion of a letter upon the choice of books. And as one so deeply versed in literature laments his ignorance of shrimp-life, it is probable that some of the readers of the Argosy may share his ignorance, and may wish to see a condensed life-history of Shrimps.

Now, the word "shrimp," as Mr. Pickwick said of the word politics, "comprises in itself a difficult study of no inconsiderable magnitude."

People who do not happen to be zoologists have a vague idea that all shrimps are alike, and, as Mr. Ruskin has done, think that shrimps, which never leave the water, are identical with the sand-hoppers that fringe the edge of the water but do not enter it.

The jumping of the sand-hoppers does not express great satisfaction with their life, but is simply a convenient mode of locomotion, like the jumping of the kangaroo or flea. It is always employed when they are forcibly ejected from their domiciles beneath the sand, or are trying to escape from the many enemies which feed upon them.

Although they belong to the same class as the shrimps: namely, the crustacea: there is scarcely a Scotch cousinship between them, and they have no more right to the name of shrimp, than the duck-bill has to the name of cat.

What then is a shrimp?

As I have already mentioned, the shrimp belongs to the great class of crustacea, so called because the outer skin is formed into a sort of crust by the deposition of lime within its tissues. In those places where the tail or limbs need to be bent no lime is deposited, so that the joints are almost identical with those of the old tilting armour.

The amount of lime differs greatly according to the various groups, the shells of many crabs being of stony hardness, while those of the shrimps and prawns are comparatively soft.

Indeed, in the prawns the lime deposit is so slight that when the creature is dried, the contraction of the skin squeezes the particles of lime out of the tissues and leaves it in the form of a white powder upon the exterior of the body. I have just written the word "Shrimp" upon a slate, using a dried prawn by way of a pencil.

This lime deposit can be beautifully shown by placing a piece of prawn-shell under the microscope, and illuminating it with polarised light. The peculiar dark cross upon the brilliantly coloured disc proves that the particles are those of carbonate of lime. The shell of the oyster exhibits a similar appearance.

This lime-deposit exercises so great an influence upon the whole life of a crustacean that I shall presently have occasion to revert to it.

Casting aside the strictly scientific side of the question, we will now glance at the creatures which are generally considered, and eaten, as shrimps. They are usually proclaimed by the sea-side barrow men as "brown shrimps" and "red shrimps," the latter being sometimes drawled out in a prolonged wail into "pra-a-a-rns." The distinction is perfectly correct, the brown being true shrimps, and the red true prawns.

There is no difficulty in distinguishing between them, the shrimps having the top of the head flat, while the head of a prawn is armed with a long curved projection, very deeply notched, so that the one can be distinguished from the other by the touch alone without the assistance of the eye.

As far, however, as the purpose of this life sketch is concerned, we may treat them as identical.

When I deliver a lecture on this subject I always send a lad round the audience with a basket of shrimps or prawns, asking each hearer to take one, not to be eaten, but to be used as an "object lesson." If my readers can possess themselves of a shrimp or prawn—I prefer the former—and will follow by its aid the next few pages, they will see that the word "shrimp" does indeed "comprise in itself a difficult study of no inconsiderable magnitude." Mechanics and Chemistry have already been touched upon, and we shall find that several other branches of science are involved in the life history of the shrimp.

In the first place it will be noticed that the shrimp has its skeleton and muscles arranged on principles exactly opposite to those of the vertebrated animals, such, for example, as man. We carry our skeletons inside our bodies, and the muscles are attached to the outside of the bones. But in all the crustacea an exactly opposite system prevails, the skeleton being outside the body and the muscles being attached to the interior of the bones; if, indeed, the parts of the skeleton can rightly be called by that name. Here, then, the science of Physiology is represented in the shrimp.

Next we come to another detail of Physiology. The entire body of the shrimp consists of a number of separate rings of the lime-strengthened material which has already been mentioned. When carefully analysed, these rings, or "segments" as they are often called, are found to be twenty in number, the last five constituting the so-called "tail." On the under surface of these segments are certain appendages which take different names according to the office

which they fulfil. Sometimes they are termed legs. Sometimes they are paddles or "swimmerets." Sometimes they are called claws or pincers. Sometimes they are modified into jaws, and so forth. But whatever may be their office they are all modifications of the simple appendage, thus carrying out the universal law that there is no waste in Nature, and that no new organ is ever made when the same object can be obtained by the modification of some organ which already exists.

Take your shrimp and straighten it. This is the natural attitude, the curved position with which we are so familiar being caused by the contraction of the muscles under the influence of boiling water. Also when a shrimp dies a natural death the body becomes bent, so that the aquarium keeper can always know whether the creatures be alive or dead.

Bend the tail backwards and forwards, and note the wonderful hinges which enable the successive segments to work upon each other. They are far superior to those of plate armour, inasmuch that they need no rivets, and even when the outer skin has been shed, and is nearly as transparent as glass, the joints will play upon each other as freely as they did when the creature was alive.

Now turn it on its back and fasten it down to a piece of flat cork, or even a soft deal board, by a couple of pins. Beginning at the end of the body you will see that it is drawn out into a sharp and flattened projection called the "telson," *i.e.*, the end of the body. Some anatomists consider that the telson ought to take rank as a segment, and that the shrimp really possesses twenty-one segments. Just above the telson are two double appendages, very much lengthened and flattened, and fringed with strong hairs, so as to look like a fan.

This "tail fan," as it may well be called, is the chief instrument of locomotion when the shrimp is alarmed. I have already mentioned that the natural attitude of the shrimp is with its body extended. Now when it fears an enemy, all it has to do is to contract the body suddenly. The enormous flexor muscles, of which the "tail" is composed, act with such force that the shrimp is driven backwards through the water with such speed that the eye can scarcely follow its track.

The lobster, whose tail-fan must be familiar to every one, is said to drive itself through the water for a distance of thirty feet at a single stroke, and to guide its course with such accuracy, that it can shoot through an aperture scarcely wider than its body without touching the sides.

Next to the tail-fan come five pairs of leg-like appendages. These are popularly called "swimmerets," on account of one of their offices, which is to act as paddles.

By their rapid movements they propel the animal through the water at a fairly swift rate. When at rest they are held forward at an angle with the body, the hair-fringe, with which they are edged,

looking at a little distance like a halo. Viewed closely, each looks like a very delicate feather.

But they pay more than a double duty. When the shrimp wishes to bury itself in the sand, it poises itself over the selected spot and agitates the swimmerets viqlently so as to scoop a pit in the sand. Into this pit the shrimp settles itself, and is almost immediately covered by the sand. As, during the excavation, the sand is much stirred up so as to conceal the creature from sight, the fishermen, who have a great knack of hitting upon characteristic names, call the shrimp by the name of "sand-raiser." Similarly they designate the common shore crab by the name of "toe-biter."

As I want to watch shrimps and not only to see sand, there is no sand in my aquarium, but only some stones to give the shrimps a foothold. It is amusing to see a shrimp when first introduced. It darts to the bottom and works its swimmerets rapidly, trying to bury itself. Finding that it makes no impression on the glass, it climbs a stone and repeats the process, but after a time seems to accept the situation.

Another use of the swimmerets is that to them the eggs of the female are attached. By their incessant movements, the eggs are washed by fresh supplies of water, and are, therefore, brought in contact with the oxygen which is necessary for their full development. Next to the swimmerets come the true legs, which are used for locomotion.

As the shrimp is not a predacious animal, and needs not to run with any amount of speed, the legs are exceedingly slight, especially the two front pairs. As, however, the body of the shrimp is almost entirely sustained by the water, strength of limb is of little consequence. Here is another example of the axiom that there is no waste in Nature. Had the legs possessed strength of structure, that strength would have been wasted.

Now we come to a pair of semi-legs, which are modified into prehensile organs.

They have the same joints as the swimmerets, but instead of being slight and attenuated, they are very much stronger than any of the other limbs and, by a very simple modification of the two last joints, become changed into forceps. In the shrimp these forceps are comparatively small, but in the crab and lobster they attain to great dimensions and strength.

Nothing can be simpler or more effectual than the means by which this change is made. The last joint retains its original size, but the last joint but one is much widened, in order to accommodate an extremely powerful flexor muscle, by which the last joint can be pulled against its predecessor so as to act as pincers.

Another point in the structure of these limbs must here be noticed. The length of the joints of these prehensile legs is so exactly calculated, that when the limb is bent the forceps at its

extremity are exactly opposite the mouth, so that the food can be transferred to the jaws with absolute certainty.

But, where is the mouth to which food can be brought by the bent claw-legs? Shrimps and prawns, like other crustacea, do not have their mouths in their heads like the higher animals. They resemble Othello's men "whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders," as represented in the ever delightful "Nuremberg Chronicle," and other works of the same epoch.

Granting that a man could be destitute of head, and obliged to accommodate his eyes, nose, and mouth in his breast, his mouth would occupy the same relative position as that of the shrimp. As the pincers cannot place the food actually into the mouth, several more pairs of limbs are modified into semi-jaws, which like the jaws of insects, work sideways, and not up and down like those of the vertebrated animals.

It is very interesting to watch a shrimp or prawn feed, and to see how deftly they can use their forceps and jaws. I kept some Æsop prawns for a long time, and found that their favourite food was the soft body of a hermit-crab. Holding the food with one claw, the prawn daintily picks it to pieces with the other, holding the morsels to the mouth. Here they are seized by the foot-jaws, which transfer them from one to the other until they are passed into the mouth. If you will press the foot-jaws aside with a pin, you will easily see the large mouth. There is scarcely any throat, the mouth opening almost directly into the stomach, just as the outer door of a cottage opens directly into the living-room.

Now turn the shrimp over, and you will see just below the eyes a rather large dark spot. This shows the position of the stomach, and, on opening it, you can easily pass a bristle through the stomach, out at the mouth, and between the series of jaws and foot-jaws.

When the shrimp is living the stomach is very perceptible, the integuments being nearly transparent. There are just now several shrimps swimming about between my eyes and the light; and the only dark portions about them are the stomach, the tail-fan, and a narrow stripe near the end of the body. Boiling renders the tissues opaque, and gives them the reddish hue which does not exist in the living shrimp any more than it does in the living lobster.

Now we are obliged to face a rather difficult problem. How can the shrimp grow? Those portions of the skin which remain soft are fairly elastic, but by far the greater portion of the skin is strengthened with lime and perfectly rigid.

The answer to this problem is, that the shrimp, like all other crustacea, grows until it can grow no longer, and then it bursts. If you bend a shrimp forwards, you will find that the large shield, or carapace, which covers the head and all the body except the tail, will give way at the junction, showing a large portion of unprotected skin. When the shrimp has grown until its garments are too tight for

comfort, it bends itself forward until the skin is stretched to the utmost. Suddenly, the over-taxed skin gives way, and the spectator might naturally think that the creature was bent on committing suicide.

Nothing of the sort. The shrimp is making preparations for extending, and not for shortening its life. By a series of violent struggles, it draws its whole body out of the gap, even pulling its legs and long feelers out of their sheath, leaving behind it the whole of its shell.

I have the cast shell of a large prawn which was shed in the fine aquarium of the Crystal Palace. It is so perfect that the closest investigation can hardly detect its real nature. The fact is that for some time previous to the "ecdysis," as this process is scientifically termed, a second skin has been in process of formation, so that the shrimp is practically wearing two coats, one over the other. Having wriggled with many struggles its way out of the old coat, it can take advantage of the elasticity of the new vesture to expand as much as it needs.

For a time the shrimp is soft and helpless, but a new deposition of lime soon takes place, and in a few days the shrimp is fit for duty as before, but considerably larger. The celebrated "soft-crabs" of southern America are simply land crabs which have shed their outer coats and have been captured before the lime could be deposited within the tissues of the new coat.

Perhaps the reader, if a Londoner, may have seen the phenomenon which house-maids term a "white black-beetle." This is simply a larval or pupal cockroach, which has shed one of its skins, and has not had time for the air to have its effect in hardening and darkening the tissues. Many of these creatures are sent to me annually as "extraordinary examples of albinism in insects." By the time that the specimen has reached me it is either brown, or mottled like an unripe horse-chestnut, and I always return it to the sender with thanks.

The ecdysis, or "exuviation" as it is sometimes termed, is not accomplished without much trouble and some risk, like the moulting of birds, to which it bears some analogy.

Now and then it happens that the shrimp fails in pulling one or more of its legs out of their former skins, and, in point of fact, pulls them off, leaving them in the shed skin. To us the misfortune would seem irremediable, but the shrimp treats it as only a temporary inconvenience. It puts up with the loss until the next moult, when a small limb springs up in the place of that which was lost. At the following moult, the limb increases its dimensions, and after the third or fourth moult, both limbs will be of equal size. Lobsters and crabs are often seen with claws of different sizes, the discrepancy being due to the power of reproducing shed limbs.

I have already mentioned that there is an analogy between the moulting of the bird and that of the crustacean. The bird's moult, however, is a very trifling operation compared with that of a lobster, crab,

shrimp, or prawn. The bird sheds nothing except its feathers, while the crustacean throws off the footstalks and external cornea of the eyes, the covering of the gills, and the entire lining of the stomach, beside the whole of the skin. As is the case with birds, the shrimp sometimes succumbs to moulting. There is now before me the body of one of my own shrimps which has not survived the operation. It has shed all the covering of the tail, but has been unable to extricate its head and legs from the carapace. The mention of this fact brings us to the eyes and gills. The former are compound organs resembling those of insects, except that whereas the lenses of the insect eye are invariably hexagonal, those of the prawn or shrimp are square.

Now we come to a question of Optics.

There are many hundreds—in insects, many thousands—of these lenses, each of which appears to be capable of projecting a distinct image upon the optic nerve. If you take a portion of the compound eye of a bluebottle or a butterfly, clear it from the pigments, and fit it to the object-glass of a microscope, you will find that anything which is seen through it will be multiplied in proportion to the number of facets which come within the field of vision. Does, then, the creature see many images or only one?

There has been much controversy respecting the theory of "Mosaic Vision," as it is called, from the resemblance of the lenses to the little squares of Mosaic work. I think, however, that there can be no doubt on the subject. If we, who have two eyes, only see a single image, there is no reason why the two hundred, or even two thousand lenses should not have the effect of projecting a single image upon the optic nerve of the shrimp.

Now for the gills, which are substitutes for lungs.

If you will lift up the carapace, you will see on each side a row of white, feather-like objects, closely pressed against the sides. These are the gills, which, to all intents and purposes, resemble those of the fishes. In the lobster they are popularly known as "ladies' fingers." In the sea, where the water is always in motion, the shrimp has no trouble in breathing, but in the still water of an aquarium, the creature is obliged to keep some of its foot-jaws in rapid motion, so as to drive a current of water over the gills.

Another question. Of what use is the shrimp, except to be eaten with tea and bread and butter?

Here we find that the creature plays no unimportant part in cosmic economy. The sea is filled with living beings, myriads of which die daily. Unless some means existed by which their dead bodies could be removed, the water would be polluted and unable to sustain life. So, the shrimp forms part of the great army of scavengers which has been appointed for the purification of the sea, and although individually it may seem to be insignificant, it is collectively of the highest importance, and could not be spared without disturbing the whole economy of Nature.

LADY CLARISSA'S VASES.

By A. De Grasse Stevens.

IT was many years before the epoch when the world began to "live up" to lilies and sunflowers, Bristol compôtes and Worcester teapots, that Harry Vane and I fell in love with each other.

Harry was in the army. He had had his commission purchased for him, in the good old-fashioned way, by his great uncle Colonel Vane, whom everyone bowed down before and in a manner worshipped. Harry said he was "a little tin-god on wheels" to his family and friends; but I thought that was disrespectful and told Harry so, and would not laugh until he pulled my curls and twitched my fine embroidered collar half off, and then I scolded him while I laughed. It is so easy to laugh when you are quite young and in love, and the April sky is blue and all the daffodils are peeping up their downy yellow heads by the old brick path in the far meadow.

Well, Harry had his commission and could write himself down as captain in the Artillery. But considering he had no other visible means of support, except a paltry hundred pounds a-year that did not even pay his tailor and his mess, I couldn't see that we were any better off for Colonel Vane's generosity than we were before. But the Colonel said we were "infinitely benefited, and that Harry ought to be proportionately grateful."

I never could understand proportion. Consequently I looked very shamefaced and confused when the Colonel spoke in this way. I knew he didn't like one to be confused, however; and so one day when he had repeated this axiom several times, frowning very fiercely and shaking his old head until his wig came quite awry and looked very rakish over his left eyebrow, I plucked up sufficient spirit to reply. What I said wasn't very original, but it sounded so.

"I am sure Colonel Vane we do thank you, Harry and I; especially as we both feel that gratitude is a sense of favours to come."

I smiled my prettiest as I said this, and was quite unprepared to see the Colonel grow very red and choke in his asthmatic old throat, and order me to leave the room, throwing after me a tender little speech that ended in "baggage." I was horridly upset and cried so violently and so long that Harry grew unhappy and went down on his knees on the damp moss in the Chinese summer-arbour, and entreated me to fly with him there and then, and be married by special licence at St. Martin's in the Fields, and march off with him to Russia, where all our brave troops were being ordered. But I was a sensible girl; and when I saw Harry in such distress and ready to sacrifice his mess and his tailor for me, I cheered up and wiped my eyes and told

him I loved him dearly and that I would not mind the Colonel's little compliments. Then Harry kissed me and we were very happy, in spite of the grinning Chinese figures that adorned the walls of the garden-arbour, and whose excessively pointed fingers had always been a terror to me from my childhood, when they used to wave and beckon at me in a mysterious and most unpleasant manner.

Glasses of fashion and moulds of form are not every day affairs; and if you are lucky enough to have had one held up to you all the sixteen years of your life, it is a sad pity and shows a great moral depravity if you evince a desire to shatter the mould or make faces at the glass. At least, so my Aunt Clarissa said, and she ought to know, because she was brought up on Miss Burney and the musical glasses, could repeat whole cantos of the "Seasons," and delighted in Mrs. Barbauld's poems.

I lived with my Aunt Clarissa, and was, in a manner, adopted by her when I was left an orphan. She was Lady Clarissa Mallery, but she was so simple-minded and unaffected that no one ever thought of her rank, and her title was more often than not forgotten. Aunt Clarissa had but two faults: she was obstinate and she was dilatory. When once she made up her mind upon a subject, the laws of the Medes and Persians were as pie-crust compared to the firmness of her views. Equally exasperating was her unwillingness to do anything in time. I used to tell Harry her ruling motto was: never do to-day what you can put off until to-morrow. It was trying enough in ordinary daily matters connected with the house, the gardens, the servants, and the poor people; but I have good cause to remember her failing at a time when it nearly cost me my happiness and my lover.

One morning in early summer Aunt Clarissa came down exceptionally early. She looked so important and mysterious I felt sure some secret expedition was on hand. Moreover she wore her snuff brocaded pelisse and big bonnet, and took her tea and toast thus arrayed, smiling at me and peering about in her short-sighted fashion.

"Betty," she said in her low and pleasant voice: "Betty, I am going up to London by the next train. I hope you won't be lonely. And, my dear, when is the next train?"

I found the local time-table, and made out the hour for her departure to be nine forty-five; it was now only half past seven. For two full hours she would have to sit in her pelisse and bonnet, but she wouldn't take them off. "I might be late you see, Betty, and that you know would be very awkward."

I did not offer to accompany Aunt Clarissa. She strongly objected to companionship on her little trips to town; but I saw her comfortably started and then I returned to my numerous little duties. One was the dusting of the drawing-room. This was a long process, for Aunt Clarissa's drawing-room was a perfect museum of old china and

"rubbish," as Harry termed it. Many were the spoils, rescued from shipwrecked vessels on the "Goodwins," that had come to her hands; curious Eastern ware, Moorish plates, Japanese lacquer, tiny Chinese tea-services, and quaint silver punch ladles, boasting a golden guinea in the bowl. All these were my special charge, and careful indeed must be the fingers that guided broom and duster among them. While I was thus engaged a curly head was thrust through the open window and a pair of fearless blue eyes sought mine.

"Come along, Betty," cried a gay, young voice. "Drop that rag and come out to me."

My name was Elizabeth, but much to my chagrin I was never called anything but Betty.

Of course I obeyed Harry. At that moment of my life, loving, honouring and obeying seemed the most natural things in all the world. What we did all that long, lovely summer day I will not recount. I have not forgotten one item of the golden hours. But since all women have some such memories locked away in the past, why should I make mine public property?

Aunt Clarissa came home to late tea, but she did not ask Harry to stay; so he, with a very bad grace, said good evening. I thought Aunt Clarissa looked tired, and if possible more mysterious than ever. She was very silent during the tea hour, though she kept smiling to herself continually. After Barker had taken away the things, and laid out my aunt's netting and the weekly newspaper, and made up the fire and gone away, bearing the discarded pelisse and bonnet, Aunt Clarissa spoke for the first time.

"Betty, child, go into the drawing-room and fetch me the 'Gustavus' vases from the chimney shelf."

In wondering astonishment I performed my errand, returning with the two vases. Aunt Clarissa took one, still smiling, and looked at it intently, turning it round and round in her delicate old hands.

"Do you think them very beautiful, Betty?" she asked.

"I think them very ugly, Aunty," I answered, regarding the remaining vase unsympathetically. "There is nothing very beautiful in a whitey-grey ground with curious raised figures in blue and scarlet on one side, and a shield supported by a cross between an angel and a griffin on the other."

Aunt Clarissa laughed.

"I had a little adventure in town to-day, Betty. Some people would be excited over it, but I am not. I am not to be humbugged you know, Betty."

"Oh, no, of course not, Aunty." But she *was* taken in almost every day of her life.

"Well, Betty," she continued, "I was walking along Wardour Street looking for a certain shop the Colonel had recommended; I wanted to match my Pekin teapot that Barker broke the other day. And as I was looking into this window and that (for I made up my

mind, Betty, I would not go into any shop without first seeing blue Pekin in the window) I saw a vase that seemed strangely familiar to me. It was set aside in a velvet case from the other things. I remembered in a moment why it looked so familiar; it was the counterpart of my two 'Gustavus' vases at home; only it was broken—the head of the angel-supporter was gone. I went in and asked about it. The shopman, a very civil man indeed, Betty, though rather big and burly, was quite affable, and told me all about the little vase: how old it was and how rare, and what trouble he had been at to obtain this one specimen. And then I told him about my two vases: and he grew more polite still, and seemed so interested that I told him how they came to me and that they had belonged to my great-grandfather, who had them from Admiral Hornsey, who could remember getting them from John Jolly, whose father rescued them from the *Gustavus:* as fine a sailing vessel as ever fell a victim to the 'Ship-swallower.' Well, when I had told him all this, and how transparent they were, and how bright the colours, he grew very impressive and asked for my address."

"Oh, Aunt Clarissa," I cried, "I hope you didn't give it to him?"

"Yes I did, Betty," said my Aunt a little tremulously. "But I am sure it could do no harm, for he really grew quite friendly, and showed me out most politely. And that is my little adventure, Betty. And now you may put the 'Gustavuses' back again, and I think I will go to bed."

Not long after this a great sorrow came to me; my very first, and therefore most bitter and overwhelming. Harry was ordered off to the Crimea. Of course we had both known that this must come, and we thought we were prepared for it; but who is ever prepared for heart-breaks and separation from beloved ones? I was not, and I wept day and night until I could scarcely see and was half ill. Harry said I was not a soldier's sweetheart, but I was too wretched to care. I thought of the terrible long, long miles we should be parted; of the fighting and the bloodshed; of the horrible uncertainty; of the torturing suspense and agony; of the helpless, hopeless waiting. I could not be brave.

Harry comforted me as best he could, and one day as we sat hand in hand in the dim old drawing-room, my eye caught sight of the 'Gustavus' vases and I told him of Aunt Clarissa's adventure in Wardour Street. He laughed heartily as he got up to look at them.

"You had better take great care of them, Betty," he said, "for when I come home again we shall need a nest egg to start on. Then Aunt Clarissa can give you these firkins, and we will sell them for shekels and live on the proceeds."

It was all very well for Harry to laugh, but I could not join with him. My imagination could not leap forward, as his did, into the future; my present absorbed all my faculties.

Well, the evil day arrived and Harry was gone from me and I did not die. The long days became weeks and the weeks rolled into months, and I found myself going about just as usual; fulfilling all my little duties, dusting the drawing-room, reading to Aunt Clarissa, and hoping against hope for happier tidings from the Crimea.

One morning, about twelve o'clock, early in the new year, as Aunt Clarissa and I were sitting over our needlework in the morning-room, Barker appeared and announced in her most prim fashion:

"If you please, me ledy, Mr. Israels to see y'r ledyship."

"I don't know any Mr. Israels," said my aunt. "Barker, you know I am not acquainted with any such person."

"So I should have said, me ledy," replied Barker, very superciliously, "only that he 'anded me y'r ledyship's card."

Here Barker laid a slip of pasteboard before Aunt Clarissa. She held it up close to her eyes and read her own name and address, and below, "Joseph Israels, dealer in curios and objets d'art."

"My dear Betty," cried out my aunt, "it is the man from Wardour Street. He has come after my 'Gustavus' vases. Show him in, Barker."

I wish with all my heart that I could rightly describe the ensuing interview. It would require the pen of a Congreve to do full justice to the situation. The dealer was big and burly, with a most unctuous voice and appealing manner; my aunt was small and delicate, with the sweetest flute-like tones and gentle demeanour; but she completely routed the Israelite without one quick word or haughty gesture.

He came to see, and, if possible, to procure the "Gustavus" vases, and as his desire to see them and to own them grew more apparent, my aunt's obstinacy increased in due ratio. She would not even show them to him, but while refusing, gave a most glowing description of them, their antiquity, history and fame. The poor dealer suffered tortures, and at length, goaded to desperation, offered ten guineas each for them, without having seen them. But Aunt Clarissa was not in the least abashed. She was gracious and smiling, but for all that she dismissed him and his twenty guineas with much decision.

"Twenty guineas indeed," she said to me after he had bowed himself away, a sadder and a wiser man. "Twenty fiddlesticks! if they are worth that to a man who has never laid eyes on them, they are worth twenty times as much to me."

A few more weeks went by and the man came again. This time, by a mistake, he was shown into the drawing-room, and when we entered he was fairly trembling with suppressed eagerness, as he hung over the little vases on the mantelshelf. As soon as he caught sight of us he rushed forward.

"Madam," he cried, "I offer you one hundred guineas each for these. No? You will not? One hundred and fifty, then? Two hundred? It is a fearful price, but I will give it. I *must* have these vases."

But Aunt Clarissa, not used to any such style of address, nor to having *must* applied to her in any form, drew her little figure up to its full height, obstinacy written in every line of face and form, and replied to him in words of quiet refusal. In vain I plucked at her dress and bade her consider. Two hundred guineas was so much money; all that Harry and I wanted for a nest egg; it would furnish the little cottage on which our hearts were set and leave a broad margin for a rainy day. But Aunt Clarissa was inexorable.

"Don't be a fool, Betty," she said, impatiently, withdrawing her dress from my imploring hand. "Why should I sell my 'Gustavus' vases? I do not think I shall ever do so. And when I do, sir," she added, turning to Mr. Israels, "it will not be for less than a thousand guineas each. I wish you good morning, sir."

Mr. Israels vanished, murmuring below his breath words the reverse of complimentary, and casting malevolent glances at my aunt. From that day I hated the very sight of the little vases; by much brooding they grew to represent to me Harry, our little longed-for home, our love and our happiness. Two hundred guineas was contained in their fat, puffy little shapes. Two hundred guineas! And as I looked at them, so fragile, so insensate, and thought of the little rose-covered cottage, and Harry, far away in the dreary, parched Crimea, with no prospect of wedded happiness, even if God spared him to me, I could have dashed the painted porcelain on the hearth and rejoiced to have heard it break into a thousand pieces. Mr. Israels came no more, and the vases stood unmolested on the drawing-room chimney-shelf.

I am sure, now, looking back on the past time, that I was not very kind or gentle to Aunt Clarissa after Mr. Israels' last visit. I shunned her, and stole away by myself, and shirked the small personal attentions it used to be my pleasure to bestow upon her. It had always been my habit to write her letters for her; she was very near-sighted, and much use of the pen was irksome; but now I never offered to help her. I felt bitter and hard and rebellious when I looked at her. She had seemed so cruel to me in the matter of the vases; and now she seemed equally indifferent to my neglect of her.

"Her ledyship do get a power of letters now-a-days, miss," said Barker one morning. "However she do manage to answer them all herself is beyond me. She never could, miss, if it weren't for that there analytical pencil."

"Oh, Barker," I cried, crossly, for I felt the covert reproof in her words, "why won't you learn to call things properly? It isn't an analytical pencil; I never heard of such a thing; it's an analine pencil, and I am sure Aunt Clarissa only uses it as a fad. It isn't any easier to write with."

"Oh, indeed! miss," sniffed Barker, and went off in a huff.

After this I did notice that Aunt Clarissa received each day a letter always addressed in the same hand. This letter she would study,

holding it close to her eyes, and cogitate over and meditate upon all the morning. After luncheon she would write an answer, which she would post herself after our early tea, always asking me very gently if I had any letters for the mail. Someone had given her a new pencil whose virtues I never cared to hear, and with this pencil she wrote her correspondence.

At last came the news of the Battle of Alma, and among the names of those slain Harry's name appeared.

God was very good to me. For a time my reason left me and I lay unconscious and without suffering. When at last I slowly returned to knowledge and to misery many weeks had passed. The tale was already a "twice told one," though so terribly new to me.

Aunt Clarissa had been very gentle to me and very kind, but I grieved to see how delicate and fragile she looked. She laughed when I spoke of it and said she should soon be all right again. One other thing I noticed: she received no more letters and wrote none. Her busy pencil hung unused upon her châtelaine.

When I rose from my bed of illness I tried to gather up all the little daily threads of my girl life, and to begin again the old routine. Thus I made my way to the drawing-room the first day I was fairly convalescent, and proceeded to dust all the old familiar objects.

Standing within the room a half comic recollection came over me: I recalled Mr. Israels' last interview with my aunt. After all, she was right. What good could the two hundred guineas do me now? I turned mechanically to the chimney-shelf to salute the "Gustavus" vases, but their place was vacant. They were gone. I rushed in to Aunt Clarissa, duster in hand, and told her of my discovery.

"I know it, Betty," she said, rather drily. "I have sold them."

She would tell me no more. When, how, to whom, for how much? These questions, thronging to my lips, were not to be answered. Aunt Clarissa had sold the "Gustavus" vases, but I was as ignorant of their fate as was Mr. Israels himself.

It was not very long after this that my poor Aunt Clarissa had a stroke of paralysis. It affected her right side, and rendered helpless that arm and hand. When I went to her she looked at me imploringly and whispered that I was not to mind; "there was time yet, plenty of time." Then she tried to raise the poor, useless hand, and burst into piteous tears at her own affliction. She grew better in a day or two, but she never left her bed again, and we who nursed her could see a daily change for the worse. She was slowly but surely passing from us into the silent land.

One evening she had been quietly sleeping for several hours, and I was reading by the shaded lamp, when she suddenly called my name clearly and distinctly.

"Betty, Betty, come here."

I hurried to her. She was lying very still, her waxen face a little flushed, her sweet blue eyes eager and excited.

"Sit down," she said; "sit down, Betty. I must tell you about my 'Gustavus' vases."

I looked at her in astonishment. What in the world had those "Gustavus" vases to do with her in this midnight hour?

"Oh, don't trouble about the vases, Aunty," I said, soothingly. "I am sure you did all that was right about them."

"Don't be a fool, Betty," she answered with her old impatience; "I must tell you about them, for they are to be your legacy. I ought to have written it down properly when I could," she added, bitterly; "before I became useless. Well, Betty, I sold the vases as I told you; and my dear I was not humbugged. But I will tell you who was—Joseph Israels. I said I should not sell them for less than a thousand guineas each, and he laughed at me. He wrote to me every day for a month offering each time a little and a little more, until at last he named a sum only a hundred pounds short of my price."

"And of course you closed with him, Aunty."

"Of course I did nothing of the kind, Betty," she said, crossly. "I stole a march on Mr. Israels and gained my point. In his last letter he said he made me a final offer, as his Grace the Duke of Sandwich refused absolutely to give more. That was an unfortunate admission on Israels' part, Betty, for of course I wrote at once to the Duke and offered my vases at my own price, and he replied sending his cheque and saying he preferred purchasing from me than taking a pair offered him by Israels at just two hundred pounds more. Only to think of it, Betty: the wickedness of Mr. Israels offering *my* vases to the Duke at two hundred pounds more than my own price! It is lucky for you, Betty, that the Duke happens to be a fanatic over 'Gustavus' china, for the money, dear, is all for you; for your little nest egg; yours and Harry's."

"Oh, Aunty, Aunty," I cried, "I do not want it now. Harry is dead, and I have no use for any nest egg."

"Don't be foolish, Betty," she answered, very gently; "all the more reason you should have it. I cannot leave you anything else, as you know. The house and all it contains goes to Hetherington Mallery, and my annuity dies with me. But there is the two thousand guineas, Betty, and that shall be yours out and out; and with your own little income and Harry's you may be very comfortable."

Oh, why would she keep referring to Harry in this way as if he were alive and well?

"I will see to it, my dear; I will see to it," she added, presently. "You must write it down and help me sign it, or else the money will go into Hetherington Mallery's hands, and that would never do. Yes, I will see to it, Betty dear, but not now; I am rather tired. To-morrow, dear, to-morrow."

And to-morrow came the second warning. The doctor shook his head. "She cannot last very long, Miss Betty. One more stroke and she will go out, my dear; out like the snuff of a candle."

Alas! the third came all too soon. But once more she rallied, and looking at me with eager, questioning eyes, made signs with her poor stricken fingers.

"Write," she gasped, "write what I told you—the vases—and the money to be yours—when I am gone—two thousand guineas, Betty—write—at once—quickly—then hold my hand—I will sign."

She was terribly excited, and to calm her I took up a bit of paper and a pencil and wrote down briefly the details and her wish. She followed my fingers with her eyes. When I had finished, I took her hand and guided it as she tried to write her name. I was bending close over her and so could follow each letter. It was a very trembling signature, but there was no mistaking it—Clarissa Mallery.

She dropped back on her pillows, and I folded the paper and put it in my pocket. As I did so she made a violent effort to raise herself.

"Don't—don't do that!" she cried out. "Leave—it—in—the light."

Then with a sudden, sharp cry, she sank back, and the poor twitching features told the sad truth all too well. Next morning Aunt Clarissa was dead, and I was utterly alone.

For the funeral came Mr. Hetherington Mallery, who walked about the old house and pretty grounds with an arrogant, possessorship air, and treated me as an interloper. The will was read in the drawing-room. Really there was no cause for a will, as all the property became his in any case, but Aunt Clarissa liked the dignity of seeming to bequeath it to him.

"I shall reside here immediately," Mr. Mallery said on the conclusion of the legal ceremony. "I trust, my dear Miss Blythe, you are not wholly unprovided for; and will not—ah—feel the change from—ah—affluence to comparatively humble means."

"I shall feel leaving Aunt Clarissa's home," I replied, "if that is what you mean by affluence. But thanks to her love I am not unprovided for. She has left me two thousand guineas."

"Oh, indeed. I am very pleased I am sure. But—ah—pardon me, I see no mention of any such handsome legacy here," tapping the will with his long forefinger.

"For the very good reason, Mr. Mallery, that it is not there, but here," I answered, drawing from my pocket the paper Aunt Clarissa had signed, bestowing on me the value of the "Gustavus" vases. I had put the paper in my pocket the moment it was written, and there it had remained ever since.

I must confess I enjoyed a sense of triumph as I gave the details of my aunt's provision for me. Mr. Hetherington Mallery was not at all to my mind, and his manner of doubtful credulity irritated me greatly. When I had finished he said very blandly:

"Of course, my dear Miss Blythe, any desire of my late uncle's late wife, properly executed, would meet with instant acceptance by me.

But—ah—pardon me, your story is so very improbable, and—ah—two thousand guineas is so large a sum, you will not, I am sure—ah—object to my looking at the paper you mention."

"You are more than welcome to look at it," I cried. "You will not doubt Aunt Clarissa's own signature, I suppose?"

I flung the paper unfolded upon the table. He smiled indulgently as he took it up and slowly opened it. As he did so, the smile upon his face changed to a perplexed expression, followed by an instantaneous look of pleasure as quickly concealed by one of much disappointment.

"My dear Miss Blythe—ah—I am very sorry, believe me—ah—there is some mistake. You could not, I am sure, jest upon so serious a matter, but—ah—this document cannot be the one to which you refer, since it is simply a *blank piece of paper.*"

"What!" I cried, catching it from him and scanning it eagerly. To my utter astonishment and bewilderment, not one trace of writing remained visible upon the surface of the paper. My own characters as well as Aunt Clarissa's signature were gone.

In vain I speculated; in vain I searched my pocket, my desk, Aunt Clarissa's escritoire, every possible or impossible place; no other such paper could be found, and there was no disputing the blank surface of the one I had produced in so much triumph. Mr. Mallery appeared to be exceedingly sorry, but I knew he secretly rejoiced. Doubtless Lady Clarissa had intended to so provide for me, but she was dilatory, as we all knew, and must have allowed intentions to stand for actions; my part in the matter he passed by unnoticed.

I took the paper and went up into my aunt's bedroom. Here I threw it down upon the table open, and sat down to think out some possible solution of the mystery. It was a beautiful afternoon, and the sunshine fell full across the table on to the paper.

I recalled each incident of that night when Aunt Clarissa told me of the "Gustavus" vases; of her eagerness to have the paper written; of the trembling but perfectly legible signature—Clarissa Mallery—as soon doubt my own senses as doubt that. I remembered distinctly folding the paper and putting it into my pocket; to my certain knowledge it had never been taken therefrom until I produced it for Mr. Mallery and found it a blank.

I forced myself to recall each trifling detail, and to do so more readily I went over to the bed and stood beside it as I had done on that night. Nothing had been changed in the room as yet. The table had been pushed on one side and the bottles and glasses removed, otherwise, my aunt's little souvenirs lay untouched. There lay her bible, her salts, her spectacles, and beside the latter her pencil. I took it up mechanically, fingering it absently; it was the same I had used to write the paper. I half smiled, recalling Barker's ridiculous name for it, "her ledyship's analytical pencil." It was in fact the analine pencil of which I had heard so much and heeded so little.

I walked back again to the table, still holding the pencil, and put out my hand to take up the paper. As I did so what was my astonishment to see on the blank surface the first few lines that I had written. Was I losing my reason? Had I brooded so long over the subject that my brain was giving way?

I bent down bewildered, confused. The sun shone full upon the paper, and as I gazed at it, one by one the letters reappeared in my own handwriting, until each sentence stood out clear and bold upon the white background. Yes, there it lay completed even to the signature, distinct though tremulous—Clarissa Mallery. I dared not take it; I dared not lift my eyes lest the writing should again disappear, leaving only a blank sheet of paper. As I stood I remembered suddenly Aunt Clarissa's struggle to stop me as I put the paper in my pocket and her broken, hurried words: "not there, not there; put it in the light."

What had she meant and why should my writing and hers appear and disappear in so magic-like a fashion? I still held the pencil, and as I thus meditated some words printed upon it caught my attention: "After using the pencil, expose to the light; the writing then becomes imperishable; but if not so exposed, or immediately put under cover, all traces of the writing will disappear and can only be recovered by strong sunlight."

Here was the mystery solved and Aunt Clarissa's warning cry explained. I had folded up the paper directly it was written, and in the dark recess of my pocket the characters had become obliterated.

Here then in Aunt Clarissa's own room, where through the light of her love she had provided for me, the light of God's sunshine returned her inheritance to me.

Mr. Hetherington Mallery paid over the legacy with as good a grace as he could assume; but he made no secret of his unbelief in the pencil, insisting that another document had opportunely turned up.

And Harry? Ah, well Harry did return to me. In those days many were the mistakes made in the "lists" and never rectified. He fought at Balaklava and was one of the few spared in that awful carnage. It was there he won his Victoria Cross and his promotion.

He is a grey-haired Colonel now, on the retired list, but he is the same Harry as of old. And no tale does he take such infinite delight in recounting as the story of Aunt Clarissa's "Gustavus" vases; concluding always with the telling peroration: "And this, my friends, is the analine pencil," which he wears dangling with his seals on his watch-chain.

UNDER NORTHERN SKIES.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," &c.

Arms of Copenhagen.

TRAVELLING from Stockholm southwards you will find Sweden a very different country from Norway, which, very probably, you have recently visited. The great railway runs down from north to south like an immense, irregular backbone of iron; and I suppose it may be called the backbone of the Scandinavian trade. Hour after hour passes, and the scenery hardly ever varies. Norway is all mountains; Sweden is flat, though neither stale nor unprofitable. It is a land of forests, lakes and rivers. You hardly ever come to a town or village or even a settlement; scarcely see a house. Immense solitudes, which, as far as one can tell, seem likely to remain so.

The wild, rugged, romantic beauty of Norway has disappeared. From Christiania to the North Cape you have nothing but a succession of marvels and surprises and overpowering impressions. But Sweden is so different that you grow weary of it; almost wonder what brought you there; feel almost sure nothing will take you there again. You think of "Les Fourberies de Scapin," and you also feel half inclined to exclaim: "Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?"

These Swedish plains and forests, these running rivers are delightful as a temporary sojourn, or even to possess as one's very own. Nothing can be more so. You revel in all the delights of the country; all rural sports; every influence that is morally and physically healthy. But merely to pass through them hour after hour, cribbed and confined in a prosy railway carriage—then it all grows very monotonous. The landscape is there certainly, but you hear neither the running of the waters, the song of the birds, nor the murmuring of the trees. Everything is drowned in the unromantic rush of the train.

So we were glad to leave it one dark night for a short sojourn at Jonköping. A storm was raging, the spirits of the air were abroad, the waters of great Lake Wettern were tempest tossed. We could not see them, but we heard their dash against the railway embankment. Then, out of all this wilderness of darkness, came the pale rays of the lighthouse on the little pier. Next, the train steamed into the station.

We went out into the night. The darkness was Egyptian and might be felt. Nowhere any glimmer of lamp or lantern to help us on our benighted way. We stumbled and groped about as blind men. The hotel porter was with us, but there was something so mysterious and uncanny about the place that we felt as if going to our doom. Presently we entered a dark plantation of trees, and were sure of it. The very elements seemed against us as they tore about and bent and swayed the branches in mad fury. Rain fell in torrents. We could still hear the waters beating against the embankment. Two great red lights in the distance gleamed from the train, which had once more gone on its way: the fiery eyes of an evil monster rushing into space.

Presently, beyond the trees, appeared a few faint glimmers. There were signs of life and civilisation after all. We gathered up our courage. Our hour had not yet come for falling into the hands of men. We came out from under the trees; the sky was above us; dark and portentous, it is true, but still free and open. The wind raged and howled and tore about like demons of the air, but we faced it boldly. A great black mass loomed ahead; a door opened, just as if our approach had been heard in all this pandemonium of the elements, which would have drowned the very progress of a Salvation Army. We were glad to enter into shelter at any price, at all risks. The porter seemed master of the situation, and ordered his myrmidons about with a dignity which seemed to say he was sure of himself. Everyone obeyed him as a Lord Paramount of the place. We wondered how it was. Perhaps the owner of this great house was a widow, about to raise him to the dignity of her late lamented consort.

But we had nothing to do with that. Romantic histories and possible domestic dramas had no present charms for us. We had had a long, tiring journey; we were hungry and faint and weary; tantalising fumes and odours came creeping up the corridors from a far-off kitchen. The porter gave us rooms in which we felt more lost than ever. The two together would have formed a goodly-sized church. I think we counted fifteen windows in them. The atmosphere was sepulchral. Candles merely lighted up the darkness and threw ghostly shadows which made one's flesh creep. The wind outside rattled against the fifteen casements, and raged, and drowned our voices. Every now and then it sank to a momentary wail, like the sighing of a distressed spirit seeking admission, only to rise up again the next instant with seven-fold force. There was a piano in the room, black and upright as a sable sarcophagus. The elements inspired us and we sent forth a wild pæan in their honour, and woke echoes in the four corners of the chamber, harmonies and discords to which the winds bent a very fitting accompaniment.

But the dining-room below was brilliantly lighted and by no means deserted. The sparkling cup went round in small and separate

circles, for there were many tables and many parties. And they laughed and "quaffed the muscadel," and pledged each other in deep, deep draughts. And the howling of the winds outside, and the beating of the rain upon the windows seemed to lose their melancholy.

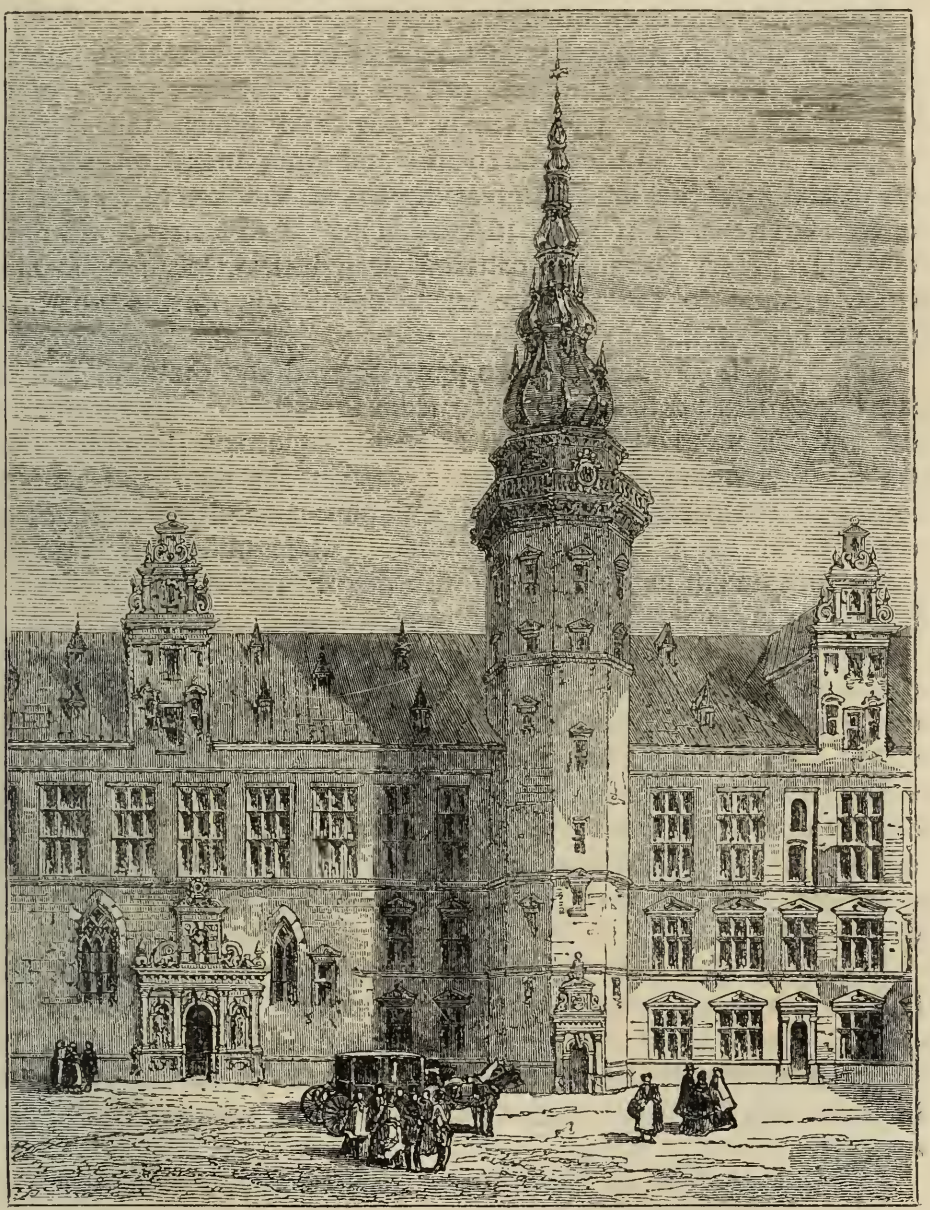
Next morning the scene had changed. We found that Jonköp-

COPENHAGEN.

ing by daylight was presentable and to be enjoyed. The storm had gone down, the sky was very blue, and the sunshine very bright and warm. The waters of the lake spread out before us had also ceased to rage. There was a small and very pretty harbour, and, at the end of the pier, the lighthouse that last night had flashed its rays into the Egyptian darkness. It was curious to find all these seaside marks and tokens so far inland. But these lakes are nothing less than small seas, and on rough days a steamer will launch out upon them as tempest tossed as if on the wide ocean, and with a motion

far more disagreeable and dangerous than any to be found on those wider waters.

Before the hotel was the canal which terminates its existence in Lake Wettern. Or rather there are large locks here which pre-



DANISH CHÂTEAU.

vent it from doing so. Thus Jonköping seems almost surrounded by water. This morning an excursion boat was getting up steam. It was crowded with people going off for a day's pleasure to Wisingsö, a small island on Lake Wettern some two or three hours distant. Flags abounded; a brass band enlivened the decks. The crowd

laughed and talked and seemed to be thoroughly enjoying life in their easy, careless fashion, living for the hour and the day. Few wants, small responsibilities, no anxieties; remembering and acting up to the old French song: "Donnez-moi vos vingt ans, si vous n'en faites rien." They make the most of all their years.

The decks were crowded and still they came, for it was Sunday. Then, at a given hour, the boat passed through the locks into the little harbour, between the piers, out on to the broad waters of the lake, which is some eighty miles long and fifteen miles broad. A grand shout from those on board and from those on shore as she parted from the land; a great display of handkerchiefs, and prolonged farewells, as if she had been going off to a new world and a new life. Then everyone scattered in a listless, leisurely manner, which seemed to say that the excursionists now on the broad lake had the best of it.

Jonköping is divided into two parts, the old and the new, and the canal may be said to separate one from the other. The new part of the town is more pretentious, less picturesque than the old. Long straight thoroughfares, built after a certain set plan and pattern; houses of stone, large and square, with gardens and murmuring trees about them as a redeeming feature. Public buildings, large and imposing, came in here and there with dignity and effect, proving that Jonköping in its way was thrifty and flourishing.

As indeed is the case. On your way to the new part, on the banks of the lake, you come to the manufactory of matches, which is a small settlement in itself, and gives work to an immense number of hands. To-day the place was closed, silence reigned, and no smoke came forth from the tall chimneys. On week-days it is equally closed to strangers, but there are signs and sounds of life in all quarters, and the quays are lined with bales and boxes of matches waiting to go out into the world, a large proportion of which find their way to England.

Jonköping also does a large trade in wood and iron and corn. There are ironworks in the neighbourhood, and you may walk out to some of them beside rushing streams and hurrying torrents. The surrounding country is very fertile, and yields large quantities of grain. So Jonköping has much in its favour, and many industries to bring it prosperity.

The old portion of the town is much more Scandinavian in appearance, more quaint and primitive, yet without any special feature for praise and recommendation. The houses are built of wood, and have the pleasant Swedish look all these wooden towns possess.

We entered the church, where service was going on. A long sermon was being patiently and devotionally listened to, but as one of us at least had "no Swedish" we quietly went out again. There were shady trees about the church, and a few people were seated on the benches beneath them, possibly reading *their* sermon in

the stones and rustling leaves. Only a few yards beyond, the blue waters of the lake plashed warmly and lazily against the embankment. This large inland sea to-day was full of beauty and kindliness, and to it Jonköping owes much of its attraction. But beyond the town and the canal are hills rising, which also add their charm to the scene. Hills musical with running waters and rich in pine forests. Jonköping we could fancy a very pleasant place for a long sojourn. There is plenty of fishing and other sports in the neighbourhood, numberless excursions far and near, but for a flying visit a day seems almost sufficient to give to it.

For ourselves we came to it in darkness, and we left it in darkness. But it greeted us with storm and tempest, dismissed us with calm. The sky was clear, the stars gave us their benediction.

Again on a certain day, or rather night, we found ourselves travelling southward from Stockholm. As long as daylight lasted it was always the same description of scenery; and when daylight returned, still it was the same. Flat, endless pastures and forests, with now and then a river or lake to break the monotony. Immense tracts of country pleasant to look upon, but never raising one to enthusiasm or the smallest excitement.

At four in the morning we stopped at a small station, where a few sleepy travellers turned out eagerly for coffee and rolls. They all looked more or less as if they had seen a ghost or suffered from nightmare. The human form when abroad on its travels at four in the morning is not at its best. The lords of creation are then hardly in a condition to assert their supremacy. But they have the consolation of knowing that the ladies of creation would present a still sorrier figure if they would only show themselves.

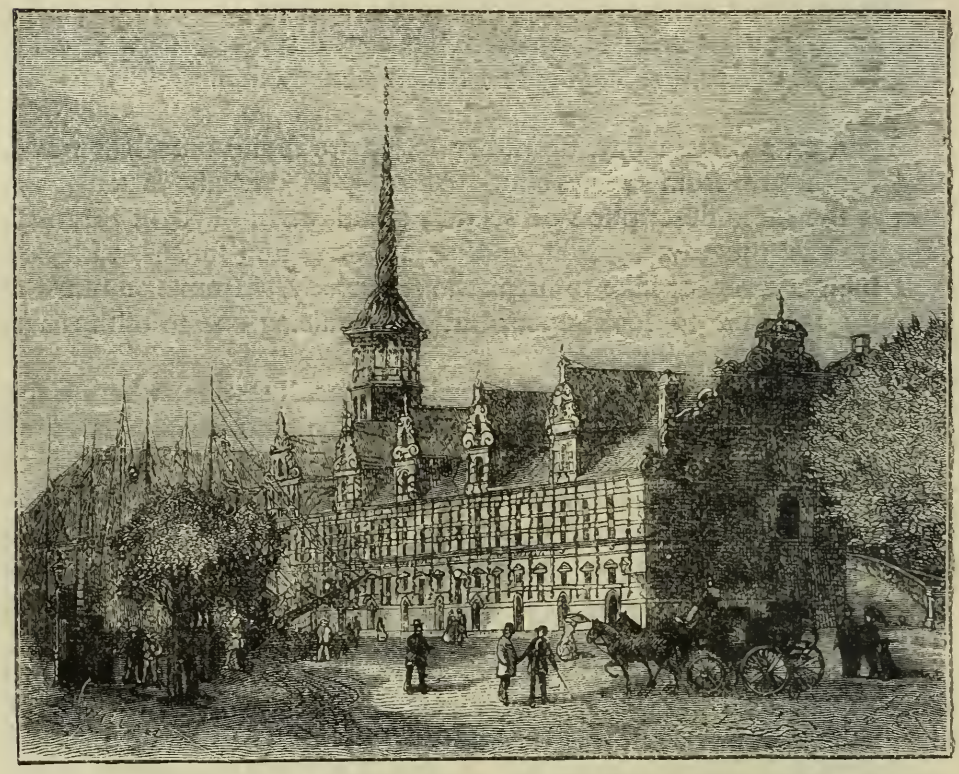
We had been up since two o'clock, surveying Nature from the open stage outside the sleeping car; watching the sun rise, the dews disperse, the gradual awakening in this world of still life, through which the train rushed like a whirlwind, raising clouds of blinding, provoking dust. We were not taken at a disadvantage; some people never are; and were ready and grateful for the coffee and rolls, which put new life into one and were worth their weight in gold. The damsels who supplied them seemed veritable ministering spirits. The sleepy travellers stumbled back to their uneasy couches for a little more sleep and a little more slumber; we returned to our stage, and the train went on.

Presently we came to Lund, the second University town in Sweden, which has had a great and flourishing past, and was a Bishopric in the twelfth century. It is in the midst of a wide, uninteresting, but fertile plain, through which we traced the long course of a winding river. Not far from the station the cathedral rose conspicuously above the houses of the town. It looked interesting, and made us half wish we had broken our journey here. But the train passed on,

and we with it, and at last reached Malmö, where the steamer starts for Copenhagen.

Again it was Sunday. For it is not always possible in travelling: especially in these northern latitudes where trains and boats are not very frequent, and where you perhaps have a dozen "correspondences" in a long journey: to make Sunday a day of rest. We soon found to our cost that it was anything but a day of rest here.

Malmö itself is a busy seaport, given over to trade and shipping. It is situated on the Sound running between it and Copenhagen, which



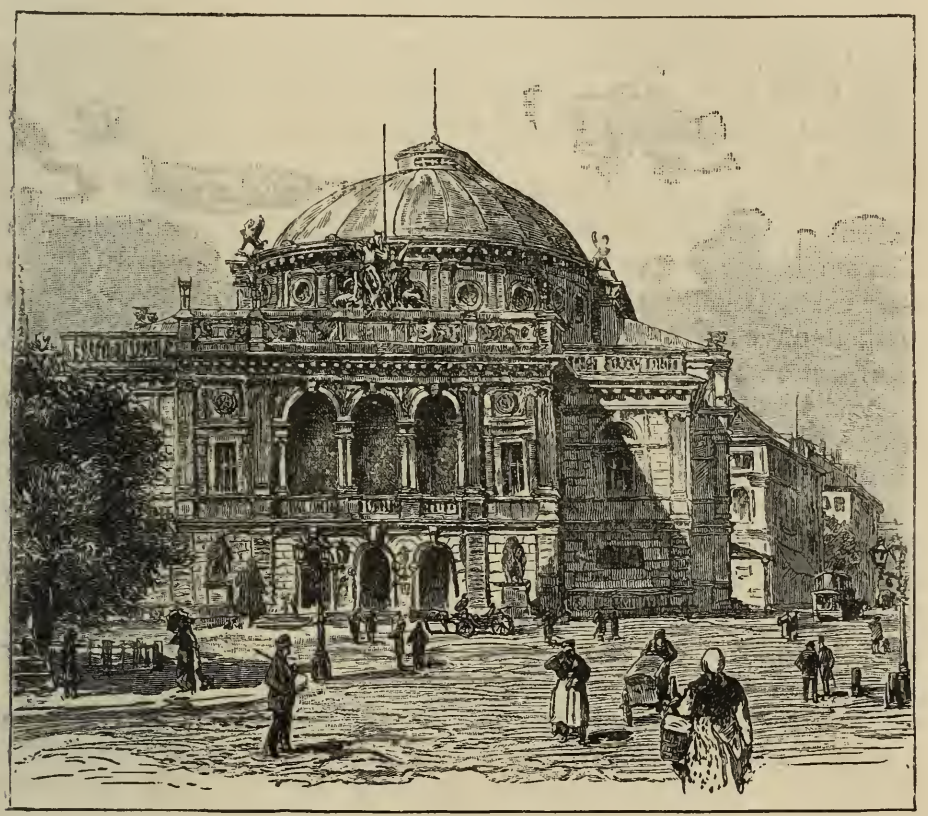
TOWN HALL, COPENHAGEN.

is about sixteen miles across. Its long quays, full of merchandise and timber, are bustling and noisy enough on week-days, but to-day were free from work. Yet in the broad, hot sunshine it looked lively and interesting, after the manner of all docks and harbours filled with shipping, all signs and tokens of the rare happiness and freedom of ocean life.

The steamer for Copenhagen was crowded with people going over for the day. There was scarcely standing room on board, and one hesitated about adding to the multitude. But Malmö is hardly the place to linger in, even for a day, unless you have special reason for doing so. Moreover, after a long and tiring journey of sixteen or seventeen hours, one longed for such a resting place as would alone

be found in Copenhagen. In Malmö there was nothing to detain or attract. It is famous as having once held Bothwell, the husband of Mary Queen of Scots, who was imprisoned here, and subsequently died in Denmark ; but all its old fortifications have disappeared, and nothing remains but the old castle.

The journey across to Copenhagen occupies about an hour and a half. To-day the sea was as a sea of glass. It ran up between the lands, and flashed and glittered in the sunshine of one of the hottest days that had been known for years. This made no difference to the



THEATRE ROYAL, COPENHAGEN.

crowd on board, who seemed to revel in it. Smoking was universal, so were laughing and talking ; "a merry band of brothers," knit together by the common interest and attraction of enjoyment and making the most of a summer holiday ; ces beaux jours de la vie, when all the world is young.

We had land in sight all the way, and, as far as possible, enjoyed the run across. The approach to Copenhagen was most imposing. It appeared what it really is, a fine and flourishing capital. The steamer passed down amidst a crowd of shipping, endless quays, one landing stage after another. Here and there a man-of-war lying at anchor, looked like a great yacht on pleasure bent rather than a vessel meant for battle. The officers in white trousers were evi-

dently the essence of coolness and infinite enjoyment. Life on board must be very pleasant. The steeples and towers of Copenhagen rose conspicuously above its houses, and, as we approached, there was a sound of bells in the air.

At length the steamer reached the landing stage. There was a crowd of porters on shore; a long black shed which served as a Custom House; a string of carriages behind for hire. Some of the porters came on board, and one of them seizing our luggage, disappeared like a flash of lightning. We followed to the best of our ability. He made off with it in such a manner that anyone might have fancied he belonged to the Society of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. We lost sight of him, but making for the Custom House, behold at the door he came down upon us as an eagle to its prey. He must have been an observant man too, for though we knew him not, he had not the slightest doubt about us.

The place was full of luggage. We had thought ourselves almost the only passengers on board and now found out our mistake. The Custom House people were as fussy and careful as the French are in their examinations; insisted upon going to the bottom of everything; marked off each package with a bit of chalk. Without this charm, handbags and everything else were turned back at the door.

Finally we were free, and rolling in an open droschke through the town. But we have a conscious feeling that this sounds far more grandly than it looked. Words, it is said, were given to us to conceal our thoughts, and with the best intentions in the world it is not always possible to place an exact picture before the reader's eye. Nevertheless it is certain that we were rolling in an open droschke through the town. We had a pair of horses to our carriage, and a coachman in livery. We will pass over the appointments in silence; the reader will kindly imagine them perfect.

From the first moment, you are enlisted in favour of Copenhagen. It is well built and bright, and almost reminds one of a small Paris or Brussels. That you are in neither one nor the other is evident by the names over the doors and the unfamiliar tongue spoken around you.

It is equally certain that you are not in Sweden. There is a great difference between Sweden and Denmark, though in times past they have been so intimately connected, and though they are so very close to each other. A subtle change has come over everything; you hardly know in what it consists. About the Danes themselves there is more animation than about the Swedes. They are lighter; freer in their movements; quicker in perception if you converse with them. They are better looking, and in many ways resemble the English. They possess their own peculiar and distinct type, and it is a very good type. They are well built, yet slight, as a race, with well-carved features and pleasant expressions. They are very prepossessing; and seeing that this applies to the middle classes generally, it is found

to a greater degree in the higher grades. After seeing much of Denmark one ceases to marvel at the peculiar charm and beauty of the Princess who dwells amongst us, and who is at once so Danish and so English.

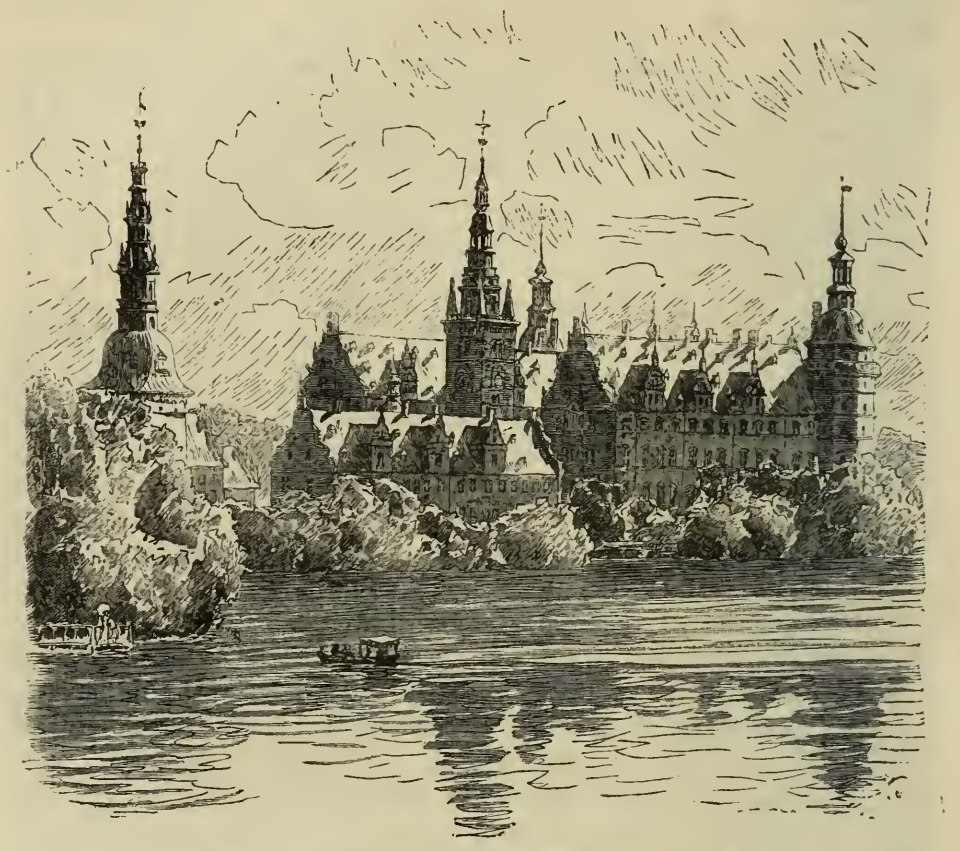
Once clear of the steamer and the quay we found ourselves in comparative quiet, for as it was Sunday the shops were closed and the streets were in peace. There was a Sunday air, an English and familiar look about Copenhagen. We felt that we should like it, and that a sojourn here would be very pleasant. It was a peculiarly bright day, and the heat, we have already said, was tropical.

We were glad to come to an anchor at the Hotel d'Angleterre, which has the reputation of being the best in Denmark and one of the best in Europe. It is also well situated on the chief square of Copenhagen, facing the Royal Theatre and other fine buildings. A tramway runs through the square, and a stream of foot passengers constantly passing to and fro make it very animated. Anyone wishing to indulge in the Pleasures of Melancholy must forswear these quarters.

The houses about Copenhagen are most of them modern, but every now and then you come upon an ancient building which charms you the more that it is a rare discovery. Under many of the houses are cellars, which are turned into fruit shops, tempting and tantalising. Up the steps and through the open, wide-winged doors there comes forth a scent of raspberries and strawberries well nigh irresistible. The fruit is also cunningly displayed in rich heaps, and the announcement of "Strawberries and cream" in very best Danish completes your downfall. You look around; no one is coming; you throw dignity to the winds and go down. At the bottom you knock against your last night's neighbour at the table d'hôte. You were then both of you as sensible and reasonable and dignified as possible; had nothing to do with frivolities of life; were strong-minded, philosophical, metaphysical. It is all over now. You have discovered a mutual weakness; gaze at each other in a shame-faced sort of way; look guilty and found out. Then you make the best of it and laugh. Your neighbour, who has been wanting a second plate all the time, but would not ask for it, takes heart of grace, goes back, and has it with you. Stolen pleasures are sweet.

Opposite to one of these cellars was the Round Tower, dating back to the year 1642. It is 115 feet high, and a winding roadway between the outer wall and the inner cylinder, a broad, spiral inclined plane, takes you up to the summit. Up this went the Empress Catherine of Russia, in 1716, in a carriage and four, preceded by Peter the Great on horseback. And up it we went in 1885, but without carriage or mounted herald. But we did there what probably Catherine did not do: we had just been to the post office, and on that height, overlooking the whole town and the surrounding country, we opened and read a budget of home letters that would have soothed the heart even of an empress.

The view from the top is as fine as Copenhagen can furnish. The whole town lies mapped before you, with all its churches and museums and famous buildings. You can see that it is built upon two islands, and on all sides are the blue waters sparkling in the sunshine. There are long, pale reaches of water afar off, and quays and harbours near at hand crowded with shipping. To-day, Sunday, all flags are flying, and the vessels and the water are lively and exhilarating. Far away across the Sound stretch the long, flat shores



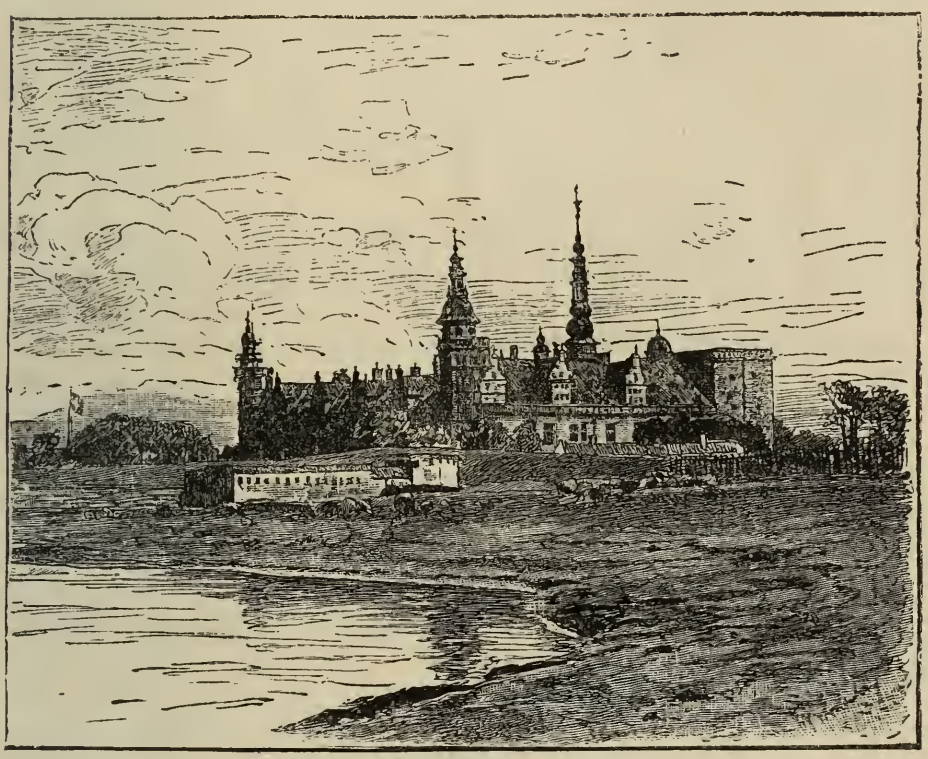
FREDERIKSBORG CASTLE.

of Sweden, a faint line almost lost in the hazy distance. You look again and again to see whether it is really land, or only a long, thin, vaporous cloud in the sky, or merely the horizon itself.

Across there, on a small island, surrounded by the harbour, is Christianborg Palace, built and destroyed and rebuilt several times over in the last seven hundred years. The present one, restored in 1828, has never been a royal residence, but is a fine edifice with magnificent rooms, and much that is worth notice in the way of sculpture and decoration. Farther away, in a different direction, lies Klampenborg, one of the watering places to be visited from Copenhagen. A short railway journey takes you to it. Here you may spend the day, and dine very pleasantly at one of the restaurants, and observe life as

it is found at a Danish seaside resort. The bathing in that warm, blue, sparkling sea is excellent, and you begin to think there are attractions here scarcely to be found in Copenhagen itself.

But Copenhagen is rich in many things. Thorvaldsen's Museum alone is a treasure, containing many of the works of the great sculptor, and many models of his works. In the centre of a Pompeian-like court Thorvaldsen himself finds his last resting place. A flat stone covered with ivy, surrounded by a marble border, marks the grave. It is a curious idea, and yet one easily entered into, perhaps with sympathy. He lies in the centre of the great city, his home for many



KRONBORG CASTLE.

years, amidst the people he loved and who loved him and did him homage. Everyone who enters his museum pays the tribute of a visit to his grave, where you almost seem to realise his presence. And here you find not only much of his work, but many of the pictures and other objects of art that he collected during his lifetime and bequeathed to the city.

You cannot help lingering in this museum. If you are staying long in Copenhagen you return to it over and over again. You revel in the work of the sculptor, his vivid imagination, powers of conception, designs at once chaste and vigorous. An atmosphere of beauty and refinement about the place charms the mind and seduces one: not by the voice, like the Sirens of Caprea who lured their victims into the blue waters of the Mediterranean by the power of

Song: but by the almost equally seductive power of Form. You could wish that there was more of Thorvaldsen's actual work and less of facsimile in the way of models; nevertheless you are so influenced by the collection that it becomes inseparable with your memories of the capital. A refinement of thought and feeling, which somehow seems to be communicated to the people, who possess both outwardly and in themselves a good deal of natural grace.

Copenhagen is also rich in other museums. The Ethnographical Museum and the Museum of Northern Antiquities are full of interest and are scarcely to be surpassed. The former is a museum of comparison, showing the difference between savage tribes and civilisation. More especially it shows the progress and development of civilisation from very early times, and in nations that were not Scandinavian. Days would be required to exhaust the treasures of the numerous rooms, and only those who have some acquaintance with the subject can appreciate the labour and skill and time bestowed upon their selection and classification.

So with the collection of Northern Antiquities, which again shows the progress of civilisation and the features and characteristics of the different ages: the three epochs of stone, bronze, and iron. Here also it requires some acquaintance with the subject to enter into it intelligently. It is a study in itself, interesting to all, but more especially to the geologist and the Antiquarian. This collection is the largest in the world, and is especially rich in its display of gold ornaments.

From room to room you may trace all the periods and transitions. You pass from the age of rough stone to that of polished; from the age of bronze to the age of iron. You come to the room of Runic stones, which brings you up to the tenth century and the commencement of the middle ages, finally reaching the Renaissance period. These latter rooms with their treasures will appeal most to the ordinary visitor, who will find more beauty in carved shields and ivory ornaments, silver altars and jewelled cups, than in brazen vessels and pagan monuments. An interesting object in the collection was the watch of Tycho Brahe, the Astronomer, ancestor of the present owners of Skokloster and its art treasures. It almost seems as if this watch also ought to be amongst them. Large and curious, it marks the progress that has been made in things not formed of stone, or bronze, or iron.

Copenhagen is not rich in churches as far as their beauty is concerned. The chief one is the Vor Frue Kirke, a modern edifice of Roman architecture. A well-proportioned building, plain and simple, but rich in possessing the figure of our Saviour at the altar, which Thorvaldsen, it is said, considered his masterpiece.

Down the church are the twelve Apostles, six on either side. Every one is a study in itself, a work of wonderful vigour and beauty. You almost feel as if gazing upon sculpture for the first time. It is life petrified into stone.

A feeling of devotion runs through all. In the figure of our Saviour the spiritual influence has been so well caught by the great-minded workman that you seem to be looking upon the more than human. No other sculptor has ever succeeded so well in this most important element. One almost feels that Thorvaldsen, like Fra Angelico, must have worked upon his knees, and that his mind undoubtedly was in a frame of deepest devotion. He must have had the utmost reverence for his subject as well as love for his work.

The very simplicity of the church, the plain walls perfectly unadorned, add very much to the effect of these sculptures. Entering from the west end you are at once struck and arrested by the figure at the far east, which seems to be pronouncing upon you the benediction of the Good Shepherd. You have suddenly passed from the noisy traffic of the streets into a world of absolute rest. It appears almost like the living representation of the scene that took place eighteen centuries ago. A moment since you were in the noisy, turbulent pulses of the world, now you are in a great calm, and almost fancy you hear once again the words, "Peace, be still," that for eighteen hundred years have so deeply stirred all hearts. As with Thorvaldsen's museum, if you are making any stay in Copenhagen you will insensibly be drawn to this church over and over again, will study these works, and love them the more the oftener they are seen.

Most beautiful also is the group of St. John preaching in the wilderness, over the portico of the west front. Every figure here is again a study of extreme grace and beauty impossible to be surpassed. There are other subjects within the church, such as the Angel of the Font; but none of it can be realised by a mere description. A church existed here as far back as the twelfth century, but it was destroyed in the eighteenth. Then another of great magnificence arose in its place, which was destroyed by the English when they besieged Copenhagen at the beginning of this century and half ruined it.

The town as it exists to-day has a bright and animated look, partly due perhaps to the clear atmosphere and the blue of the sky. The houses are tall and straight, something like those of Paris or Vienna. Some of the shops are very good, and most conspicuous and attractive are those which display the Danish porcelain and hand-painted pottery, and the pure, chaste models, on a reduced scale, of Thorvaldsen's works.

Canals run through some of the thoroughfares, often crowded with shipping, adding very much to the liveliness of the town, and giving it occasionally a Dutch-like appearance. Especially is this the case in front of the Exchange: a large, long building of considerable attraction, in the Dutch Renaissance style, built in the seventeenth century but recently restored. The spire is curiously formed by the bodies and tails of four dragons or serpents twisted together, with heads turned downwards to the four points of the compass. Here,

with this building on the one hand, and the canal with its shipping and bustling quays on the other, you might almost fancy yourself in Holland.

Copenhagen both in itself and its neighbourhood is rich in palaces, but they cannot be described in our present limits. All should be visited, for all possess special points of attraction. In one of the parks is a statue of Hans Christian Andersen, whose charmingly ugly face seems to be smiling benignantly upon the world of youth, of whom he will ever be the delight. But a smiling mood was not always his to enjoy. We know that he was troubled with a sensitiveness and self-consciousness that almost amounted to vanity, inclined him to morbid moods and seasons, and a certain irritable impatience which must have caused him much suffering and sorrow. It could not be otherwise with an organisation so delicate, a mind and imagination so pure. In perfect harmony with youth and innocence, possessing the spirit of a child with the thoughts of maturity he was out of harmony with all the rough and disenchanting influences of the grown-up world around him. He lived in a world of his own, and was unfitted to come into contact with any other. His own world was Fairy-land; all sunshine and pathos and magic. What bond of union could such a spirit find in a world of realities? His body lies in a churchyard not very far off, but his soul has taken flight to those regions where alone it could find the food and companionship it needed; innocence of youth, eternal sunshine, the delights of a Fairy-land beyond all he ever imagined.

But Copenhagen possesses other influences than those which bring out one's better thoughts and feelings. Its most popular rendezvous is Tivoli, which on summer nights when the trees are pleasantly "umbrageous" is crowded by the inhabitants. It is a famous place with all sorts of attractions. Excellent bands indoors and out of doors; small theatres, whose pieces and acting do not call for unqualified praise; performing dogs and dancing bears; an electric railway; all kinds of amusements which, if harmless enough, have that air of *abandon* and frivolity which is not of the healthiest description. But as water will not rise above its own level so the amusements supplied meet the demand. The mind and moods of man are not always in a state of exaltation; perhaps the greater part of them know nothing of aspirations or ever dream of "rising on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things."

So night after night and year after year Tivoli is crowded and popular. And if the amusement took an elevating turn and went in for pictures, taste, Shakespeare, and the musical glasses, its winding walks, and shaded alleys, and miniature islands would soon be left to the bats and the owls.

There are innumerable excursions from Copenhagen, far and near. Its quays crowded with steamers are not the least interesting of its walks. These steamers will take you to all parts of the world. You

may go round the coast of Sweden, either up the Cattegat or through the Baltic, touching at all sorts of interesting places. You may visit the different islands of the Baltic, and so often come upon almost untrodden ground. When we found ourselves in the island of Bornholm, with all its beauty and attraction, I was the only Englishman there, or who had been there for some time.

So was it again in Gotland: that wonderful place, with its crowd of ruins gilded by flashing skies and glowing sunsets: the town of Wisby, which has no rival, yet is so little known.

A long sojourn may be passed very pleasantly in Copenhagen, with all sorts of changes and varieties for many days. At the Hotel d'Angleterre you will find yourself in excellent quarters. The house is well conducted, light, and cheerful. The table d'hôte is good, and after it you may take your coffee in the covered courtyard, and admire the trailing creepers and the decorated walls. You must have a little patience with the waiters, who are slow, and in the breakfast room a little too much left to themselves. But where will you find absolute perfection? Not in this lower world, and not this side the millennium.

There are certain places which attract you at once, just as there are certain people. You hardly know why or wherefore, and it is sometimes lost labour to try to analyse the feeling. It was so with Copenhagen, and we should always return to it with a feeling of pleasure. For Sweden we have no such sentiment; but the very sound of Norway again stirs up thoughts, and feelings, and emotions, that if we were æsthetic we should call "intense," but as happily we are not, we will leave the reader to imagine for himself. Whatever is to him most delightful: whatever exhilarates him and raises from his shoulders the load of daily life and the accumulated memories of sin and suffering and sorrow; the anguish of heart known only to himself; the sleepless pillow and the sick awakenings: whatever causes him to forget all these and for a moment raises him to dreams of happiness and a sense of freedom for which language has no word, such to us is the very sound of Norway.

But we are wandering from our subject, even as we must now wander from Copenhagen. Not up the Cattegat towards the iron-bound shores of the midnight sun, but the other way, into the Baltic.

It was a glorious evening when we bid a temporary farewell to Copenhagen, and steamed through the crowd of shipping down the long, striking, and picturesque harbour. Steered past flat reaches, where old and picturesque windmills were conspicuous, towards the flat shores of Sweden, and passed into the open sea on our way to the Island of Bornholm.

GUDRUN.

Translated from the German by Major North, R.A.

NOW lovingly caressed and anon fiercely buffeted by the waves of the Baltic, between the coasts of Pomerania and Sweden, lies the Danish island of Bornholm. It is little known to the world, and the profusion of wild roses indigenous to the place has acquired for it the sobriquet of the Isle of Roses.

The environs of the little town of Allinge, on the North West, are especially picturesque and remarkable for the peculiar wildness of their formation. We are here, suddenly, and without any prelude, confronted with a magnificent natural panorama.

Behind us stretches the vast and gloomy expanse of the plateau; before us a chaos of weird forms modelled in solid rock—and the boundless horizon. But even here the poetry of romance weaves its magic web, for the venerable ruins of Hammershuus Castle look down upon us from an eminence, as if inviting the wayfarer to rest and dream awhile within its mossgrown walls.

Making Allinge my starting-point I used often to visit the old Castle. The road at first lies along the strand, then winding to the left commences an ascent; after half an hour spent in scrambling amongst rocks, the "Vale of Paradise" is attained. Through the heart of the dell, encircling the castle, extends a promenade whose perfection of scenery challenges imagination itself. The path on both sides is bordered with lilacs and roses in thick hedges, which grow to a sufficient height to form a species of vaulted alley, rich in fragrance, retaining its grateful shade and coolness during the prevalence of extreme heat. Birds make melody in the thicket; insects float upon the breeze with a somnolent susurrus; golden sunbeams, quivering upon the verdant foliage, glide down upon the blossoms which strew the ground; giant ferns seem to wave their fans with a dreamy motion.

A few paces through this Eden brings the wanderer before the deep, placid languor of the ocean. Masses of rock cleft in rugged wildness form at once a small bay and a fitting frame for so glorious a prospect.

I sought my favourite haunt one day when the fierce heat of the sun's rays was untempered by a breath of air; but the rough-hewn bench under the gnarled oak, whence the view extended to the distant sea commanding the course of passing ships, was occupied.

A girl busied with needlework was sitting there. In my first surprise I fancied that I beheld some apparition or wood nymph. It was, however, no "unreal mockery," for the figure arose to its feet

when my footsteps became audible. Standing there in all her marvellous beauty, in a flood of sunbeams, she resembled some goddess of the Northern mythology. The garb of the country developed freely the graceful symmetry of her tall, slender figure, and lent a peculiar charm to her appearance. The most striking feature in this vision was, however, the nobly modelled head, the expressive countenance encircled by a profusion of light, waving hair, the eyes shaded by dark lashes, blue and fathomless as the ocean, their gaze now fixed upon the intruder.

We stood silent for a moment, confronting each other in mutual surprise, for neither of us had dreamt of finding this solitude invaded by another human being. Should I pass on my way placidly, or seek to enter into conversation? I hesitated. Every form of address which first occurred to me seemed bold and inappropriate; I should have preferred to content myself with gazing at her and listening to her voice. As it was necessary, however, to put an end to the situation one way or another, and vainly endeavouring to combat the ascendancy of the girl's charms, I enquired my way to the little fishing village of Vang, which I had long intended to visit.

"Ah, you speak Danish," she observed, with a friendly smile, for she had at once set me down as a foreigner. And then, with all the charm of natural affability which characterises her compatriots, she explained that the way led me across the rocky strand. I noted anew in her a peculiarity of the Bornholm folk: avoiding all use of the expression right or left, they refer invariably to the points of the compass. She accompanied me to a point from which I could not miss my way and wished me "a pleasant walk" at parting. This meeting gave me food for reflection during the rest of my ramble.

What had caused me to take so much interest in this girl? Surely not her rare beauty alone. I pondered and pondered, and at length believed I had found a clue. I had a dim recollection of some tragic feature in her face, such as nature bestows in many human beings, and now my mind's eye descried it clearly and distinctly defined in the graceful lines of her mouth. Besides this, her eyes had a gaze full of dreamy thoughtfulness, as though the soul of their possessor dwelt in the far distance. At all events this maiden had something unusual about her.

At Vang I entered the cabin of a fisherman to partake of refreshment, as there was no inn there, and mentioned my encounter; asking, after giving a description of the girl, if anybody knew her. At once came the reply: "Of course; that was our lovely Gudrun; everybody in the island knows her. A good girl—but *klarsynet* (a clairvoyante), which, however, is not unusual amongst our women."

"Ah!" thought I—"a clairvoyante! That accounts for the dreamy look in her eyes." And the weather-beaten sailor added:

"She has occasioned her father, old Captain Torstensen, much grief already from this cause. She wanders at night to the ruins of

Hammershuus and talks with the spirits there. But she will be married soon. She is engaged to Gunnar, the pilot, who is due home shortly in the Russian East Indiaman, the *Nautilus*."

On my departure the old man refused my proffer of remuneration, convincing proof of the hospitality of the islanders. He accepted, however, a few cigars, thanking me heartily with a grip of the hand which I felt for some days after.

My interest in the girl increased. Did she really then possess the gift of second sight? And how did it find vent? Musing over this I set out on my return.

Thinking to shorten my journey I took a by-path. When I reached the old Castle, night had already fallen. I found that I had lost my way, and was soon utterly at fault. I wandered about amongst the rocks for a good hour, and at last in the distance descried a light which I made my beacon. It led me to an isolated house. I knocked with the intention of asking the way. The door was opened, and before me stood—my beautiful acquaintance of the afternoon.

This second meeting so surprised me that I was at first unable to utter a word. At last I explained my dilemma to Gudrun, who kindly invited me to enter. It was her father's house. The latter, a tall man of fifty, easily recognisable as a sailor who had seen much of the world, gave me a friendly reception, set some refreshment before me, and proposed to accompany me until I should regain my road. Thus, for the second time, I had asked the way of Gudrun. She referred to this herself with some graceful jest which lent a fresh charm to her naturally thoughtful countenance.

After this our meetings were more frequent; sometimes at the house of her father, who at times accompanied me in my rambles, sometimes walking near the old Castle. One day we visited the ruins in company. We clambered about over the ancient walls, Gudrun proving herself an entertaining guide. She was well acquainted with the history of the Castle, which had been the ancient stronghold of Bornholm.

It was another lovely afternoon. Long films of gossamer floated in the air; the sea rose and fell with a gentle motion. We stood upon a crumbled wall of the Castle, absorbed in contemplation of the indescribable beauties of the scene. Around us fragrant roses entwined with ivy.

Suddenly Gudrun turned to me and asked:

"Do you believe in presentiments, and in revelations of the future?"

She uttered the words hurriedly, and apparently after an internal struggle.

"I might almost do so," I answered; "for I have known men who possessed the unhappy gift of foreseeing their destiny, and this was always of a mournful kind."

I had never made any mention to Gudrun of the information which had been imparted to me at Vang with reference to her peculiarity.

"Truly an unhappy gift!" she repeated. "I also possess it, and

when the spirit of prevision overcomes me, a veil seems to be torn from my eyes, and in the boundless future I see nothing but misfortune."

I knew not what to reply.

"Look, yonder!" she cried suddenly, in a sharp, strange voice, pointing in the direction of Allinge, whilst her vision seemed strained upon some far off point: "a stranded ship; foaming waves. He is calling—he is calling! Yes, Gunnar, I come, I come!"

And she made a movement as though she would hurry away from the spot. I held her firmly by the arm, and turning my eyes in the direction indicated saw nothing but the azure sky and the placid surface of the sea.

"Ah, it was a vision," sobbed the girl. "I am so unhappy! Oh, I know that I shall die soon. This is the third time that I have seen it. They are calling me, the spirits of the deep. But come; evening is closing in and you must not lose your way again."

I accompanied her to the house, striving to dispel her dismal forebodings. But she only shook her head thoughtfully. At her door she turned. "Good-night, and au revoir," she said, looking mournfully at me; and I took my leave, strangely affected by her mood.

The day breaks dull and tempestuous. Dark clouds are scudding athwart the sky. On the sea the storm rages in uncertain gusts. The waters rise up and lash themselves in fury, and long foam-crested chains of mountain billows hurl with a mighty crash against the rock-bound coast. The island seems to tremble to its very foundations. "God protect our mariners," is the thought of every islander. My room in Mardier's commands a view of both sea and town. The latter is a small place built upon the strand. The streets are deserted as the rain descends in torrents.

The storm increases to a hurricane. In the harbour, sea-mews fly hither and thither uttering discordant cries which are drowned in the roar of the tempest, the thunder of the waves.

So pass morning and afternoon. The hurricane still rages with unabated vehemence. The lantern is already alight in the neighbouring lighthouse at Hammerberg. Several fishermen are busy in the harbour trying to make their boats, which are dancing about like nut shells, more secure from risk of injury.

But hark! A dull, brief report resounds above the din of the tempest and the turmoil of the waters. This is no thunder of the waves; it is a cannon shot. We hear it once more, and then repeated at shorter intervals. Men congregate at the harbour's mouth, and a large telescope is procured. But no ship is yet visible; the horizon is too circumscribed. Thus half an hour passes away. All Allinge is on the alert. People unite in groups to discuss the plight of the devoted vessel. I find myself attached to one of these knots. Now—it may be about five o'clock—something black becomes visible against

the background of Hammerberg. It draws nearer and becomes plainer—we distinguish a ship.

A sudden flash quickly followed by a report gives a renewed intimation that the vessel is in distress. But who can render any aid? The coast is precipitous, and wild, uneven crags jut out far into the ocean. The sea is so rough that no boat could live in it. The danger becomes more and more imminent. The craft, a brig already bereft of its mainmast, must strike. It is hopelessly lost.

In the excitement of the awful moment I had been unconscious as to my immediate surroundings. Suddenly, quite close to me, I heard a cry full of despair, a soul-stirring wail.

It was Gudrun who stood wringing her hands, her fallen tresses a prey to the blast. "The *Nautilus*—Gunnar!" she cried in her anguish. "Save him—my love!"

The doomed ship was none other than that which bore her betrothed homewards. Men ran to and fro with confused cries, but no one ventured to the rescue. "It would only be tempting Providence," declared a venerable sailor; and he added, uncovering his head in all reverence: "The Lord of Heaven and Earth deliver them." All the bystanders followed his example and united in the prayer.

Gudrun rushed from group to group, imploring, supplicating, wringing her hands, but nobody ventured to court certain death.

Suddenly Captain Torstensen, her father, appeared upon the scene, wearing a "Sou'-wester" and long sea-boots.

"Who will come with me?" he asked, in a clear, resonant voice. He met with no response. Some attempted to dissuade him from his enterprise, even resorting to force. The most experienced sailors regarded it as madness to attempt to navigate in such a sea.

"Then I shall try it alone," he declared, hurrying towards his boat. Two young men followed him, at first doubtfully; then, adjured by Gudrun, determined to join him in the desperate venture.

A rush was made for the landing where the boats were lying Torstensen could scarce stand upright in his boat, but for all that he cast off the painter. And now, just as the men were in the act of pushing off, Gudrun leapt into the boat. A cry of terror rose from a hundred throats. Many women were weeping. The boat heeled over and the oarsmen were evidently striving to put back with Gudrun. A receding wave, however, carried the boat rapidly out of the harbour.

The crowd stood breathless; not a word was spoken. All eyes were centred on the boat, which appeared on the lofty summit of a wave only to disappear next moment in the trough of the sea. Gudrun's fair locks were floating in the wind like a cloud fleck. The minute guns had long ceased to echo from the brig.

Darkness set in, and they had not returned. Nothing further was seen of the ship. Night fell. The storm raged on, the waves still

battled fiercely, and out yonder those who were meeting their doom drew their last breath unheard.

Unheard? No. There is One who listens and hears.

The people of Allinge passed a sleepless night. As for me, I pondered over Gudrun's words of the previous day: "Do you hear? Oh, I know I shall die soon!"

Once more day dawned, but the morning was bright and sunny. The storm had subsided. Men were searching the shore. All that remained of the brig was a shattered wreck wedged in between the rocks. Here and there a body was lying drowned on the beach. Gudrun's father lay amongst these dead. And about a mile west of Allinge, on a projecting rock, two lifeless forms were reclining locked in each other's arms: a maiden of passing loveliness and a stalwart, handsome youth. They were Gudrun, the clairvoyante, and Gunnar, the Hero and Leander of Bornholm.

TWILIGHT HOURS.

Some calm, declining day that follows spring,
When Nature rests, her Maker's praise to sing,
While birds at vespers carol 'mid the trees,
And flowers are cradled by the summer breeze,
Where brooks with soft responses ripple by,
And ev'ning's mirrored blushes grace the sky:

Such time as this, how great delight to stray
From eager strife of busy haunts away,
To tread with aimless, slow, forgetful feet
Some world-forgotten, time-endeared retreat:
And muse where Thought on Mem'ry's pleasure stays,
What passing shadows tell of coming days.

Here tinkling sounds that follow soft sheep-bell,
Or cuckoo's lonely calls from distant dell
Most eloquent, discourse of tranquil ease,
And exercise a subtle charm to please:
The soul, released from earth's confining care,
Now lightly soars as eagles' wings will bear.

High up amid the everlasting throng,
It joins the angels in their festal song,
Eager to celebrate His praise and might,
Whose sun-like splendour sheds celestial light,
And clothes—precursor of eternal day—
The night of doubt in morning's bright array!

W. F. J.

IN A HOUSE-BOAT.

THE marriage occurred in the early spring, while Mr. Adolphus Carew still went through the daily amount of overwork from which we know our young men suffer in Government offices. The pretty bride preferred this to a hasty ramble on the Continent, and the wedded pair resolved to take a holiday in the summer instead of a honeymoon trip.

The fact was that Mrs. Adolphus was as busy and energetic in mind as she was pretty; and she desired at once to enter on the hard labour of providing home comforts and unimpeachable dinners for her newly acquired treasure—a husband. What wonder that to Adolphus life seemed only likely to be too short for the full appreciation of his happiness? To wave a tender farewell from the London street to the London window where a sweet bright face responds, every morning; to be braced for the red-tape agonies of the day by the remembrance that four o'clock *would* come at last; and that after two well spent hours of recreation following the severe mental strain, there would be a recherché and well-cooked meal to make life blissful: this was the enviable existence of my hero.

One evening in June—they were just going to the opera—Millicent heard the delightful plan that was to ensure a happy holiday.

"My darling, Brown—Higglesby-Brown, you know—has a house-boat moored in the upper Thames. He offers it to us for a month, from the 10th of July."

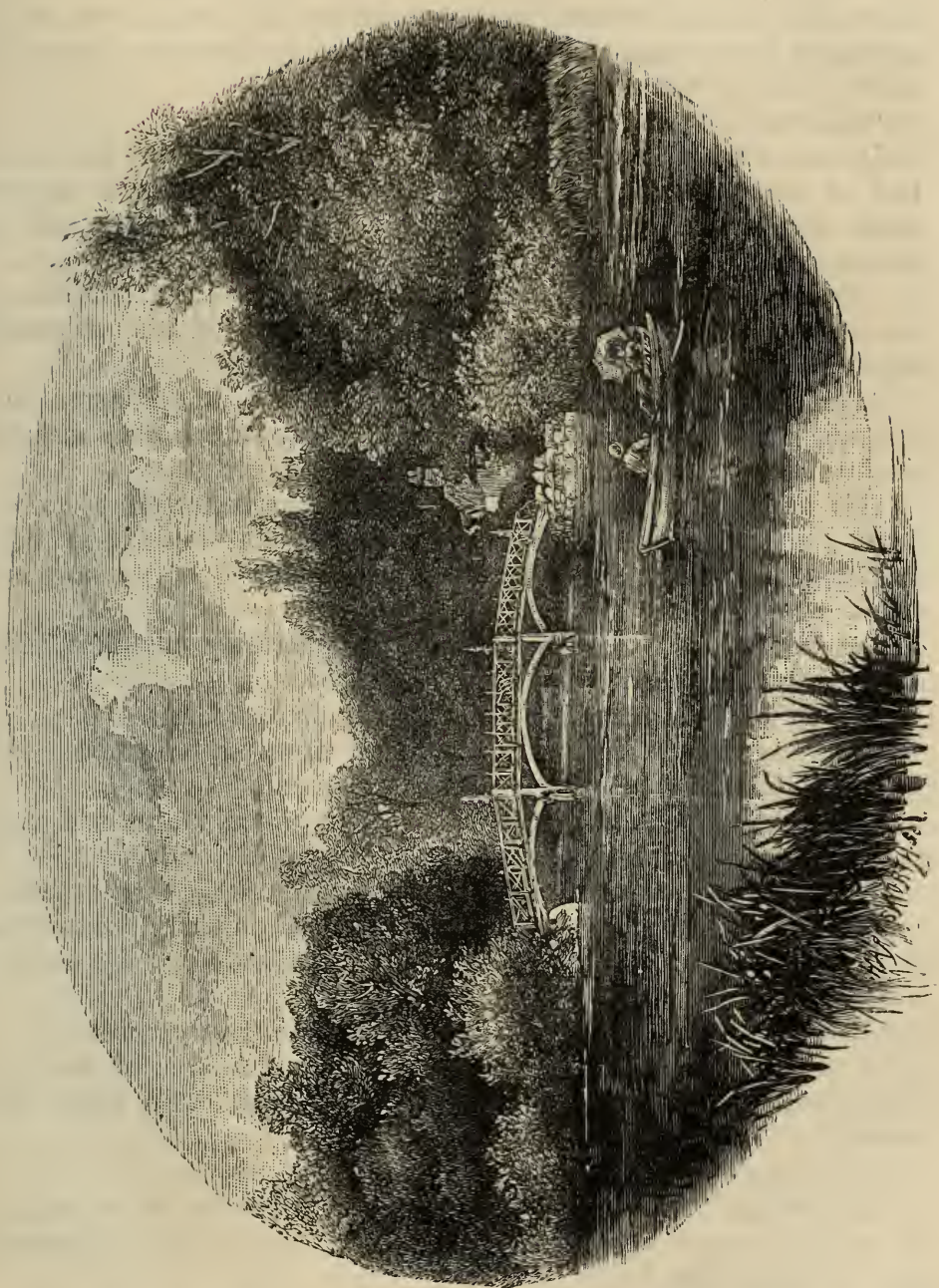
"*Delightful!*" cried the bride, beaming with smiles. "So peaceful! And we shall be *all alone*," she tenderly added.

A silence sufficient to admit of an extremely wasteful prodigality of kisses ensued, and then he murmured:

"That is the charm of it! Here we are separated for hours; there we shall have each other. And, my darling, I feel it is our first chance of being totally dependent on each other for society."

Another blissful silence, broken this time by the servant's announcement that the cab was at the door.

Well, July arrived at last, and Millicent packed away her London



GOING TO MARKET.

dresses, and looked fondly on the simple semi-shepherdess costumes in which she was to delight the eyes of her husband for a month. In a small sailor hat with a red ribbon, a striped red-and-white flannel short skirt, a white flannel boating body, it was a most dainty little figure that entered enthusiastically the small boat which conveyed the young couple to their home on the waters, when the railway journey was over.

"How delicious!" cried Millicent; "let us explore!"

It needed not a long tour to inspect one salon, two tiny bedrooms, and in the stern a small cooking and sleeping apartment for the man—for Mr. Higglesby-Brown had left his attendant, a retired soldier.

"*So* convenient!" said the young lady. "No long staircases to mount, and everything within reach of your hand. Why *do* people bother so to live in large houses!"

"Perhaps in winter, Milly, they need them. But I agree with you, one could never tire of such a spot. Those superb trees with the evening light on them! That picturesque bridge!"

This happy condition of things was further increased when Mr. Crow, the servant, served a dainty cold dinner which had been bought at Whiteley's ready cooked; supplemented by potatoes and salad.

The day had been hot; the night was deliciously cool, and Milly rose with ardour prepared for housekeeping duties.

"When does the butcher call?" she enquired of Crow.

"There is no butcher, if you please, ma'am, within four miles——"

"No butcher! what do you do for meat then?"

"Mr. Higglesby-Brown, ma'am, *he* liked tinned meats, and used to have a box down every week."

"What's that? tinned meats!" exclaimed Adolphus, entering. "Those horrid things they give us an article on every few months to show what excellent food the poor might have if they would! Not for me!"

"But, Adolphus, dear, what *shall* we do if we can't get meat?"

"You could scull the four miles—it's nigh six though, by the river—and fetch back some, sir, if you're so minded," said Crow, demurely.

"I daresay!"

"Oh, couldn't we, Adolphus? It would be such fun to market for ourselves—and bring home the basket," said Milly, brightening up. "*Do* take me."

How could he say no? So after a leisurely breakfast, in full sunshine, they started. Four miles down-stream is a very simple matter, especially to a young man who is beguiled by the pleasure of giving a first lesson in sculling to his pretty wife.

The village was reached, and some meat procured. There was no hotel, only a little inn, or what is better named a beer-shop. By this

time ominous clouds had came over, and a peal of thunder rolled slowly away in the distance.

"Pleasant, that!" muttered Adolphus. "We had better wait to see what weather is coming. It is twelve o'clock now."

What was coming, and came, was a desperate shower. They took refuge in a cottage, where the woman provided them with some bread and cheese—the only fare attainable.

Directly it cleared they started "home," the cushions uncomfortably damp, and their spirits becoming so, when the four miles full against stream was visited by two drenching showers.

Crow gravely condoled with them, recommended change of garments, and suggested hot whisky and water. Milly shook her head at the last, but promptly insisted on putting ready her husband's dry garments, and then changed her own dress.

When a meal had refreshed them, the advisability of writing at once for a store of provisions to prevent the recurrence of such a chance of famine was discussed and acted on: Crow being entrusted with a telegram to despatch from the nearest place.

Then a box of books was unpacked, and Adolphus read aloud on the house-boat, where they made a sweet addition to the Sylvan picture.

"Adolphus, this is happiness!" murmured Milly, fondly; and he did not gainsay her.

The next week set in wet. The first day of it Milly produced a piece of art needlework, and Adolphus devoted himself to committing to paper his views on the very great advantage these house-boats were to humanity. They had enough to eat, and did not suffer, though the saloon and cabins had a very damp and stuffy smell. The third day of rain found both husband and wife more silent, except that they twice contradicted each other. Then Milly complained of a head-ache, and wished that they could get out, and Adolphus barely commiserated the head-ache, and said wet weather was awfully slow except at a club.

On the fourth day a gentle melancholy clouded Milly's bright face, and her husband stood just without the saloon under an umbrella, glowering at the glorious woods. He turned his wearied eyes from the trees he knew so well, to the face he knew still better.

"Good Heavens!" mentally raved Adolphus, "if this goes on I shall become a brute! I shall hate the sight of the wife of my bosom!"

On went the rain. Crow punctually served the meals, but fresh meat was not attainable. Adolphus smoked a pipe after dinner, still under an umbrella, watching eagerly for the boat which he hoped would bring his box of necessary luxuries—rather a contradiction of terms, but not of facts.

In sight—and Adolphus rose, with the words "At last!" on his lips, but these were changed with a wild shout of joy to "A friend!"

and he rushed to the side to welcome with fervour a man he had invited to come "when he could." Robinson Crusoe could have felt scarcely less joy at sight of his fellow man.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the jolly stranger, Tom Higgs, by name: "thought I'd get the best welcome this weather. Where is Mrs. Carew?"

"Here, Milly!" cried Adolphus, joyfully, and Milly appeared at the door of the saloon with the faint reflection in her face of a terrible doubt in her heart. Adolphus had been silent and depressed for days—he had tired of her. A stranger woke his interest and his joy where she had failed! Under the circumstances her greeting of the friend had not the warmth Adolphus had expected to see, though it lacked nothing in grace.

"How very kind of you to come this wretched weather, Mr. Higgs," she said, holding out her hand with a faint smile. "We are completely isolated! Has the box come?" she added to her husband, with something of sternness in her tone, forgetting as older wives sometimes do that pot-luck is all an unexpected guest can expect, and husbands are not *always* to blame for the chance of their arrival.

"No! By Jove, Tom, we are in a horrible plight! Nothing but tinned meat to offer you till our goods turn up!"

"Don't name it! Mrs. Carew, I'm a famous cook, and I'll teach you to make some good things out of these tins."

At another time Milly would have brightly accepted the offer. As it was she said she left everything to the man, and disappeared to give him his directions.

Adolphus Carew felt angry and uncomfortable, but his friend was really a bit of a philanthropist in his way, and having expected to find things just as they were, pretended to see nothing. But in the course of an evening smoke on the deck of the house-boat, enveloped in waterproof, Mr. Tom Higgs aired his sentiments slowly.

"Delightful theory"—puff—"this isolation. Does for bachelors"—puff—"who have knocked about"—puff—"and don't care for society"—puff—"but there ought to be more than"—puff—"a man and his wife!"

"Perhaps," said Adolphus, a little stiffly, for he was rather sore at what he actually found himself calling Milly's temper. "But when a fellow needs change and quiet, he ought to be able to get it in peace."

"Ah," said Tom, meditatively, filling his second pipe; "we're awfully hard on the girls we marry."

"How?" asked Adolphus, in amazement. "You never did marry; so what do you mean?"

"I mean this. We take a girl (*you* do, for instance—individually I *don't*) from a lot of brothers and sisters, and forget she's used to the society of anything but your precious self. When she's done all she can to be charming, you yawn over the weariness of things in

general. In a confoundedly small space like this you can't lose sight of her for ten minutes, nor she of you; so if you get a spice of annoyance about you, you can't forget it."

"It has been horribly slow since this rain began," admitted Adolphus; "but a man may make a mistake in his choice."

"So may a woman, bless you! fifty mistakes; and often does," exclaimed Higgs, vigorously. "Bless you, I say again, a man with one of the pleasantest faces and the most charming manner I know is a brute to his wife and children. Bah! it's all chance." Clouds of smoke mingled with the small rain for a few seconds.

"Wouldn't you like some whisky and soda?" demanded Adolphus.

"Shouldn't I, just!"

"I'll get some—or—or will you come in and have it?"

"Not a bit of it. Fetch it up," said Higgs, heroically.

Adolphus found his wife with a closely-written letter, gradually progressing, and hot tears falling on it. That letter was to a favourite sister, recommending her never to marry. But it was torn up and the fragments floated on the Thames that night. Poor Mr. Higgs waited long for his whisky and water, smiling genially to himself. At last it was Milly's voice that begged him to come out of the horrid wet and take it in the cabin. He descended and saw that the weather below had changed from stormy to mild and unsettled.

"We're going to make a move, Higgs," said Adolphus, genially; "this weather is killing, in a place like this. Brighton will be better—eh, Milly?"

"Yes," said Milly, with a pretty tremble in her voice, and eyes that were still soft with tears. "Won't you come with us, Mr. Higgs?"

"That I will, Mrs. Carew, and many thanks."

"And we'll make Crow a present of that box of provisions—if it ever turns up. Let's go to-morrow!"

"You're a prompt fellow, Carew. Now take my advice and never shut yourselves up with nothing to do. House-boats are splendid at Regattas and for large parties, but they are damp, uncomfortable holes that breed nothing but mischief when you get weather like this."

Milly's grateful smile thanked Mr. Higgs—and as she slid her hand into the one her husband had laid at her disposal under the table-cover, she said:

"I think the wet makes one get cross and fanciful, but I *don't* want to live in a house-boat again."

MINNIE DOUGLAS.

A QUIXOTIC REQUITAL.

By E. M. Davy.

I THOUGHT her the most beautiful woman in the world. I worshipped her with a passionate girlish adoration that can only be comprehended by those who have had a like experience to my own. How it came about that an intimacy should have sprung up between the fashionable Mrs. Dalyel of Dalyel Court, Warnshire—a Frenchwoman by birth, but now the widow of a wealthy Englishman—and my small insignificant self, will be seen by the conversation which took place the morning after I arrived on a visit to her at Bath.

We were sitting in a private room of the Grand Hotel, overlooking the busy thoroughfare of Stall Street, and were watching with a melancholy interest the numerous Bath chairs with their sad-eyed occupants passing in endless succession to and fro. Contrasting the lot of these poor sufferers with my own, my heart overflowed at the thought of all Mrs. Dalyel had done for me, and turning to her I tried to express in a few broken words some of the gratitude I felt.

She silenced me at once.

"Dear Lucy," she said in her musical voice, with the slight touch of foreign accent which gave to her speaking such a charm: "dear Lucy, after all what is it that I have done? Why, truly nothing! You exaggerate the facts, my child. I was in London for the season, and, like others of my friends, I took the pottery craze, and joined a class at Powell and Storm's. You taught that class, and I took a wonderful liking to my charming little teacher. The other day a celebrated physician spoke to me extollingly of Bath. I decided at once to come here—as a preventive rather than a cure, for, thank heaven, my health is excellent. I came, but found it dull; oh, so dull. Then suddenly remembering that your holidays were now going on, I wrote inviting you to join me here. In short, I wanted you to amuse me, Lucy. You owe me no thanks for that."

"My poor father ——" I began.

"He was ill, blind, dying, when I knew you first. That accounted for your poor little white face and oft-times tearful eyes. You had to toil and slave to earn money, that he might not want for necessaries. When I learned this, my heart bled for your trouble, and I—who had more money than I could spend upon myself—gave you some of it for him. I sent also a little fruit, a little wine, a doctor. Ah! I believe he was a little doctor too! Say, was it not so?"

"Dear Mrs. Dalyel, do you count it nothing that you made my father's last days happier, that you gave him what all my loving toil could not procure? My gratitude ——"

"Pshaw! Child, speak not of gratitude. It consists but in the name. It is the rarest ——"

"But mine ——" I protested.

"Ah, *yours* will doubtless bear fruit such as the world has never known. It will enable you to move mountains—to give up kingdoms for my sake."

"Why do you laugh?" I asked, much pained. "Since I can remember anything I have lived only for my father—and my art. From to-day I shall live for something more: to prove to you that there *is* such a thing as gratitude."

"Dear little enthusiast!" exclaimed Mrs. Dalyel, with a laugh. "Then be it so. Convert me to your belief as quickly as you will. But see how the morning passes. I must go and drink the water."

A few moments later we crossed the street and passed under the colonnade to the pump-room where Mrs. Dalyel took her glass of water from an attendant and sat down at one of the small tables within the cordon, signing to me to do the same.

Though everything was new to me, I glanced but carelessly about the room, at the well known statue of Beau Nash the King of Bath, at the anxious faces of the water drinkers. I sought for something else, and found it soon in the shape of a white board bearing in large black characters the words "To the Roman Baths," on which also was a hand with index finger pointing out the route. It was there I had promised to meet Horace, but what excuse could I frame for leaving Mrs. Dalyel? Happily none was needed, for at that moment she happened to look up, and her eyes following mine, she said:

"No need to sit here all the time with me, dear child. Go down and see the newly-discovered Roman Baths. I have seen them once; for me that was enough. In half an hour you can rejoin me here."

I thanked her with a somewhat guilty conscience, and left her lingeringly.

On passing out of the pump-room I found myself in a narrow passage with doors on either side. Presently I came to a small spiral staircase which brought me to a vaulted corridor hot with the fumes of baths; then, descending a steep wooden ladder I emerged suddenly into the open air on to the scene of the recent excavations.

The hot August sun poured down his intensest rays from a heaven unflecked by cloud. Around lay heaped, in picturesque confusion, frieze and capital and column. I glanced momentarily at the few persons inspecting the ruins, but all were strangers to me. I paused on the broad stone steps laid there by our mighty conquerors sixteen centuries before, and gazed down into the dark waters of the bath.

Presently a little pebble, so small it scarcely caused a ripple, was flung into the water close to me. Guessing it to be a signal, I turned instantly in the direction whence the pebble came and stepped out of the sunshine into the shadow of some vaulted masonry. There before an easel stood the "one man in the world to me." He drew

me to him in the shade, the large canvas on the easel forming a friendly screen before us. He looked into my eyes, and kissed my lips; and I—what wonder that my pulses throbbed, and that my heart beat high with happiness? My short life, hitherto so weighted with care, seemed bathed in sunshine now.

"I may tell Mrs. Dalyel our secret?" I asked Horace as we were about to part to meet again on the same spot next day.

"No, Lucy," he said, "not yet; but soon." And as his will was mine I agreed to keep the secret of my engagement yet a little longer.

Three days went by, three happy days; for each morning I met my lover at our chosen and apparently safe trysting place. But on the fourth, as we sat in our cool retreat, I saw to my inexpressible dismay the tall and graceful figure of Mrs. Dalyel crossing leisurely the open space before us.

Horace, whispering me to sit still, rose, altered quickly and dexterously the position of his easel—so that while it still served as a screen to me, he himself stood out in the sunshine—then took up his brush and palette and began to paint. Mrs. Dalyel saw him instantly, and I was struck with the look that came into her face on doing so. It was unmistakably one of recognition and of startled, glad surprise.

"Mr. Lorenzo!" she exclaimed, when she had come quite close to him. Horace raised his hat, but apparently did not see the outstretched hand.

"No doubt you are surprised to find me here, Mrs. Dalyel," he said. "I left Rome about a month since and came to London. I ran down here because ——" The pause he made appeared significant.

"You knew that I was in Bath? You came to seek me?"

Her voice was so soft and low, it thrilled me. What a revelation it contained. Scarcely breathing, I awaited his reply.

"Here is my excuse," he answered, evasively, calling attention to his work. "You see I am painting a picture of this place. I am building up these ruins as they may have been in the golden days of their glory, and peopling them with figures of the past."

"The past!" she echoed. "Oh, at seeing *you* again, I can think but of *one* past. The time, five years ago. The scene, Rome. The actors, you and myself. Have you quite forgotten, Lorenzo?"

"I have forgotten nothing," he answered, in the hardest, bitterest tones I ever heard; and he continued to paint vigorously, while Mrs. Dalyel, from beneath the shadow of her deep lace-bordered parasol watched him with a feverish look in her fine dark eyes.

"Since we parted, Mr. Lorenzo," she said, gently, "I have seen your name rise gradually to fame. Fortune has been kind to you, whilst I ——"

"Whilst you are as handsome as ever; as rich, and I trust as happy." She laughed, a little disdainfully, it seemed.

"You judge by appearances," she said. "To tell you the truth, I am most greatly changed."

"Not in my eyes, at least," he answered, in deep, concentrated tones that made me shiver and turn cold. Then she bent her proud head close to his—so close—and spoke rapidly a few words that I could not hear. But he drew back, and to all appearance irrelevantly asked: "You are not alone here, Mrs. Dalyel?"

"No. I have with me a little protégée; a young girl whom I have taken up."

"Another whim of the moment?" he asked, bitterly.

"What would you?" she returned, with a slight shrug and her most pronounced French manner. "We idle women who have no ties—we take what you English call 'a craze' for this or that——"

"When 'this or that' means man or woman, then I say the play is sometimes dangerous for the victim," he interrupted. "Perhaps I speak too feelingly. This is scarcely the place, nor is it yet time to enter on ——"

"Come to the hotel," she said, not allowing him to finish his sentence. "When may I expect you?"

For a moment he seemed to hesitate, then said in a firm, low voice: "It was my intention to call on you this evening. I will do so."

He went on painting. I saw a flash of triumph leap into her eyes. Then she bowed and turned away.

I rose from my dark corner, thinking to pass Horace unperceived. He had dropped his brush and stood gazing after Mrs. Dalyel, seemingly lost in thought—thought that was pleasurable, for he smiled.

"Don't run away like that, Lucy!" he cried, hurriedly catching at my dress as I brushed by. I dared not trust myself to speak, much less to remain, but shaking myself free from his detaining hand, I fled across the open space and up the wooden ladder, scared and breathless. There I turned, and looking down on the scene I had just quitted, saw the sunshine gilding the broken columns, glistening in the waters of the bath, and Horace standing where I had left him with a bright smile on his lips. I pressed my hands before my eyes to shut out the sight, and, shivering, made my way back to the hotel.

Too miserable, too mystified, to dare to meet Mrs. Dalyel at lunch, I made an excuse to remain in my own room, but on joining her later, was struck with the change in her. Her cheeks were flushed, her beautiful eyes beamed with a new light in them. She looked handsomer than I had ever seen her. And I—I watched her with a pain at my heart that was new and strange to me. When the wretched dinner was over—which one of us could not touch for happiness, the other for very misery—I was about to leave the room, but Mrs. Dalyel called me to her, bidding me be seated on a low stool at her feet, my hand close clasped in hers. She said: "Lucy, my liking for you is no idle whim. I love you dearly. As a proof of this I have something to tell you that concerns you very closely. But first of all I shall make a confession to you that regards myself. You love me, child?" she asked, leaning over me.

For sole reply, I pressed my lips upon the hand I held, while she continued :

"When quite young I married Mr. Dalyel. My parents arranged the marriage according to the approved French custom. Six years ago my husband died, leaving me a large fortune, the bulk of which, however, in the event of my making a second marriage, goes to his only relative : a man of whom I know nothing, except that he disgraced himself in my husband's eyes by going into trade. The first year of my widowhood over, I went to Rome. When there I took a craze for art, studied for several months under one of the first artists, and became acquainted with a young man named Lorenzo, also studying in the same studio. He was many years younger than myself; very handsome, a charming companion, devoted to art, and very soon became equally—or perhaps rather more—devoted to me. Well, what would you ? I encouraged him—as a pastime, of course —but never for one moment believed he was sufficiently infatuated and presumptuous to ask me to marry him. He not only asked me to be his wife, however, but seemed astounded by my refusal. I laughed at him, ridiculing to scorn a proposal from a man so young, unknown, and above all penniless. We parted in bitterest anger ; for he was proud, high-spirited, passionate as myself. But as time went by, I found, too late, alas, that I loved this proud young artist, whom I had scorned in Rome—loved him with a love your girlish heart could not understand. I said 'too late ;' I thought so then ; but now, thank heaven, I have seen him once again. He is coming here to-night, and I will tell him ——" Bending over me once more, she kissed my forehead, speaking the last words in a whisper : "Can you guess, my child, what I will tell him ?"

"That—you love him ?"

"Yes !"

"But Mrs. Dalyel, forgive me, are you quite sure that he—that he still loves you ?" I asked, trembling, surprised at my presumption ; for, could anyone who had once loved her, fail to love her all his life ?

"Do you suppose, Lucy, that having once loved me —— ?"

Ha ! It was an answer to my thoughts. She broke off suddenly ; then continued in a different tone.

"After all, this is only leading, my child, to what I have to say. Your future, Lucy, is as interesting to me now as is my own. I have found a husband for you. The man to whom, if I marry again, my fortune goes is coming here. I have corresponded with him through my solicitor, and this letter, concerning the affair reached me to-day. I took it this morning to the Roman bath, to read to you, but we missed each other somehow, and since then other thoughts have filled my mind. He says : 'I am ready to marry your protégée as soon as she will have me, and will call upon you on the evening of the day you receive this letter.' It is short and to the point. He has plenty of strong, good sense, this dear stockbroker cousin, you may be sure !

My solicitor tells me he is not rich. Stockbroking has not flourished with him it seems. But with my fortune—mine that I shall forfeit to marry the man I love—you will make quite a grand match, my child. Stand up and let me look at you, little bride elect."

Mechanically, at her bidding, I stood up. What else was there for me but to obey?

"What a poor little trembling mouse it is! How white and scared you look. Oh, but you will be very happy with your stockbroker—far happier than painting pots and plates, my dear. He will be here to night—and my lover too."

I was still standing in front of her and she was looking at me with her beautiful eyes and smiling red lips. I tried to speak but knew not what to say. In my agony, my right hand clutched a little cord about my throat. So strong was the grasp, that the thread snapped suddenly, and a large medallion, till then concealed, fell to the ground at Mrs. Dalyel's feet. She saw at a glance it was a miniature of Horace, and looked at it closely as she took it in her hands, then from it to me.

"How came you by this?" she asked, in a tone in which pride was strangely mingled with surprise.

"Mrs. Dalyel, I painted it from memory."

"*You?* Is it possible you know Mr. Lorenzo? Why are you so slow in answering? Speak, Lucy."

"I knew him many years ago," I replied, in a voice I did not recognise as my own. "He lodged in our house. We were always poor, you know. He lodged with us in London before he went to Rome. I was a child then."

"But this is a picture of him as he is now. It is like, wonderfully like," she said, looking at it absently, then suddenly up at me. "But, child, child, why do you look like that? There is something more. Tell me, for heaven's sake tell me ——" She caught my hands and held them so tightly that she hurt, while her eyes seemed to burn like fire into mine. "Tell me—what is this man—to you?"

"To me? To me?" I gasped, all the suppressed passion in me rising at her words: "Mrs. Dalyel, how can you suppose that he is anything to me? Have you not said he is—your lover?"

And snatching my hand away, I fled swiftly from the room.

On reaching my own little chamber I sat down at the toilet-table dazed and helpless. A long time must have passed for it was dark when someone knocked at my bed-room door. It was Mrs. Dalyel's maid.

"Will you please go to the sitting-room, Miss Vane," she said. And the next moment, without a pause for thought, I was turning the handle of that door.

The bright light dazzled me at first, but I was able to perceive that there were two persons in the room—Mrs. Dalyel and a gentleman. He had his face turned from me; he was partly hidden by the window-curtains.

Mrs. Dalyel rose. She was deadly pale; her lips compressed and bloodless; her head was thrown back proudly. She scarcely seemed to see me, but the look in her eyes was terrible.

"Lucy Vane," she said in a hard, set voice, out of which all the old music had departed: "I told you that I was interested in your welfare, and that, in accordance with the custom of my country, I was arranging a marriage for you. You are aware that my late husband's cousin is ready to marry you. He is here, and desires that I present him to you. Miss Vane—Mr. Horace Dalyel."

So saying, and drawing herself up to her full height, she swept proudly from the room.

Horace! I started at the name, then raised my eyes to the man who, after she had pronounced his name—and not before—turned and came a few steps towards me. My heart gave a bound and then stood still at sight of him.

"Ah, what a charming little comedy this has been!" he exclaimed, laughing, as he came forward eagerly with outstretched hands; but I clasped mine behind me and drew back.

"Lucy, won't you speak to me till I explain? Well, then, my darling, sit down here while I tell you my story as short as I can make it, for I want to see you your own dear, smiling self again."

I sank mechanically into the chair he placed for me, and he continued:

"You know when I lodged with you that I was bent upon being an artist, but I did not tell you my real name, or that my cousin—many years my senior, and my guardian—did all he could to dissuade me from my intention. I determined to be the master of my own destiny, however, and, without informing anyone except your father, I went to Rome and studied there under the name you know me by—Lorenzo. In order to enjoy my freedom to the fullest and to 'snap all links of habit,' I gave out that I had gone upon the Stock Exchange. It was a happy thought, for by that means I completely ostracised myself from my cousin and his set."

He paused a moment, then went on more rapidly:

"In Rome, many years afterwards, by a strange fatality, I encountered my cousin's widow, and—I do not deny—fell desperately in love with her. She gave me every encouragement, and it did not appear to me presumptuous to believe her passion real, knowing as I did, that according to my cousin's will, if she married again, the bulk of her fortune would be mine. But she behaved infamously; refused me with the utmost arrogance, calling me adventurer, fortune hunter, I know not what; little thinking that a marriage with me was the sole way to *keep* her wealth, instead of forfeiting it. You may be sure I did not enlighten her on the point; but I swore to be revenged. A rare opportunity presented itself on discovering *you* to be her protégée. Another, still more unique, occurred when, a few days since, she wrote to her lawyer to negotiate a marriage between the poor,

despised, plebeian stockbroker cousin and her dear protégée, Lucy Vane. The letter was forwarded to me here and I made a draft of the answer to be copied by the lawyer's clerk and re-enclosed to Mrs. Dalyel.

"Lucy, the little comedy is ended. The dénouement came about most satisfactorily, and behold me, your true lover, here by Madame, my cousin's orders to make love to you!"

He laughed out merrily, but stopping suddenly: "you scarcely seem to——understand?" he questioned, in an altered tone.

"You—you expect me to enjoy 'the little comedy'?" I asked with a half sob, which I in vain tried to suppress.

"Why not?" and he sought to take my hand.

"Because to me it is more tragedy than comedy," I answered, striving to brace every nerve to calmness, and succeeding to all outward show.

"We view the matter through different lights, it appears, Lucy. And it is hard—just a little hard on me, I think, to take it as you do. You are so utterly unlike your old dear self—is it Mrs. Dalyel's baneful influence? You know I strongly objected to this visit, but you were perfectly infatuated with the woman——"

"Mr. Dalyel, I must leave you. All is at an end between us," I said, getting up and going towards the door.

"But, Lucy, my own darling, this is simply madness! Whatever has come over you? You surely are satisfied that I do not love that woman?"

"I cannot argue. But I have my own reasons for assuring you that from now we must be strangers. Nothing that you can say will alter this determination. Please let me pass."

"Then you have no right to keep these reasons to yourself. It is the barest justice that you tell me what they are."

Oh, how could I? How could I, since he did not know, or sought to conceal from me, the fact that Mrs. Dalyel loved him?

"Mrs. Dalyel is so beautiful, so good ——" I stammered.

"But my dearest girl, when I tell you my heart is yours, and that I do not love Mrs. Dalyel!" A ray of light shone on the difficulty.

"Are you quite sure that I — love you?" I asked, crimsoning at the bare thought of the untruth I was about to act.

"Lucy, if you, laying your hand in mine, and looking at me with your truthful eyes, can say: 'Horace, I do not love you,' I will believe you, and will give you up. Not otherwise, I swear."

"Then heaven pardon me, for you drive me to it," I exclaimed, in desperation. "Horace, I do not love you." I neither laid my hand in his, nor looked at him. I said the words clearly and firmly that were to part us for ever, and before he had recovered from his consternation, I had fled from the room. The ordeal was over.

My sacrifice was made.

Mrs. Dalyel I did not see again until next morning. I was dressed ready for departure, my portmanteau on a cab before the door.

"Mrs. Dalyel," I said, falteringly, "I have come to wish you good-bye."

She turned and looked at me, her face cold and stern as it had been the night before. There was a scornful smile on her beautiful red lip.

"Where are you going?" she asked, coldly.

"To my old life. To the home in which you found me; and I shall have all I want—all that is good for me," I corrected, hurriedly.

"Go, then."

"Yes. But I cannot go like this." Her coldness cut me to the heart. "Will you not kiss me first? I have loved you so!"

"I would as soon kiss an adder," she cried, her eyes blazing with anger. "Go, go; never let me see or hear of you again."

With a choking sensation in my throat I turned away. Pulling down my veil, I left the hotel and started on my sad and solitary journey back to town.

How dreary looked my two small rooms in the dull, narrow street of Kensington, despite the warm welcome of the kind, motherly woman with whom I lodged!

But I was determined not to repine. I must accept my life as it was and make the best of it. Besides, had I not still my art? So I set about putting my little studio in order, taking from where I had stowed them, my bits of china, my tapestry, my specimens of painted glass. This done, I sat myself down to paint a plaque. But alas, my hand seemed to have lost its cunning, my eyes their sense of colour. Ah, how I have laughed since at the sorry sight that unlucky plaque presents, for I continued to paint at it long after it was too dark to see. And then—and then, I suppose I dropped asleep.

"Thank heaven, you are awake at last!" a well-known, much loved voice exclaimed.

I had lifted my head from the table on which it had been resting, rubbed my eyes, and began to look about me. The gas was lighted. Was it a dream that Horace stood before me?

"I followed you from Bath by the next train," he went on, excitedly. "And now tell me, Lucy, tell me that you did *not* mean what you said to me last night."

"I *did* mean it. I can never, never marry you," I answered, recovering myself. I knew now it was no dream; but that Horace was really there demanding—as he undoubtedly had the right to do—an explanation of my conduct.

"Why cannot you marry me?"

"Because——" Oh, how could I explain?

"I *know* you love me, Lucy."

"This is cruel, wicked of you!" I cried, turning away my face.

"And loving me—knowing also that I love you—it is cruel, wicked of *you*," he continued, using my own words, "to doom us both to misery for no reason that I can understand. If you persist in refusing to have anything to say to me, pray who will be the gainer?"

"Mrs. Dalyel."

"Great heavens, child! Do you imagine that she is at last in love with me? I confess I had not thought of that!"

"Then do think of it, Horace. You have met again. It is—it *is*—quite possible."

"This is indeed too rich a joke. What then?"

"She has been so good to me—so good! It would be such base ingratitude ——"

"Ah, now I begin to see! You would sacrifice your happiness to a Quixotic fancy. But in that case, Lucy, you should take care to be the only sufferer. You have no right to spoil my life too."

"But would it spoil yours? Suppose she loved you and was ready to marry you to-morrow?"

"I would not have her if there were not another woman in the world! I love you, Lucy, and you only. Come, sweetheart, put all these far-fetched ideas of gratitude aside. Unsay the cruel words you spoke last night. Tell me that——" He paused; we stood close together now. He caught my hand and pressed it unhindered to his lips.

"I love you, Horace," I whispered, "and decided wrongly. Oh, can you ever forgive me?"

He did forgive me; but Mrs. Dalyel did not. I have never seen her since that—to me—most wretched day at Bath.

She has a new "craze" now, I hear, and I am glad of it, because I believe if she has that she is happy. Dressed in sable garments, covered by a long dark cloak, she goes at night to visit amongst the London poor, there, with a generous hand, ministering to their needs. They look upon her as an angel of mercy, and her name is blessed by the miserable and the afflicted. Am I then right in calling it "a craze?" Is it not rather that her heart has softened, and that what must have been a real trouble to her has opened it to Paradise?

I have married Horace, and am happier than I had thought it possible to be here below. I realise now how wrong I should have been had I given him up for ever, and so spoilt and, perhaps, wrecked two human lives. I have never seen Mrs. Dalyel since that fatal day at Bath, but something whispers to me that the hour is not far distant when we shall meet once more and she will restore to me all the affection so freely lavished upon me in the days gone by.

OUT OF THE CURRENT.

SMALL claim upon the world have I,
For life long since has passed me by,
I scarce know when, I scarce care why.

The years have grown on me apace—
Old friends look sharply in my face,
Some more remembered look to trace.

An idle, lonely life I lead,
I read and smoke—and smoke and read—
Books and a pipe, man's chiefest need!

My room's old-fashioned, like myself,
Hung round with plates of curious delf,
Book-panelling on every shelf.

An old Sir Joshua beauty fair,
A print or two, a quaint arm-chair,
Two furry friends the rug to share.

Not much of this world's goods to own—
Enough for one who lives alone,
Whose friends and youth alike are flown.

Sometimes in dreamy reverie—
My old young-self comes back to me,
And all the things that used to be.

Old thoughts, old hopes, then fresh and new,
Old fancies that I once thought true,
When life was fair and skies were blue.

The old home, with its childhood joys,
Whose grey walls rang with healthful noise,
The merry shouts of girls and boys:

My father's words of counsel wise,
The love-light in my mother's eyes—
Ah me! how fast the memories rise.

My college-friendship, made for life;
We parted scornful and at strife—
Now I've my books, and he his wife!

Then wondrous plans, Utopian schemes,
Those pleasant ink-and-paper dreams
That look so well—I've written reams.

That sweet face smiling at my side
I swore to guard with life-long pride—
Well! Heaven took her ere I tried.

Then work that went against the grain,
And money coming just in vain,
For shattered health and worn-out brain.

All dead! all gone! a tale that's told,
The hot quick blood of youth is cold,
And I myself am growing old.

I care not when the end may be,
Few here will miss my company,
There some are looking out for me.

One above all will watch, I know—
Ah, Love! this world lost all its glow
When you were taken—long ago.

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

M. L. GOW J. SWAIN.

"AT LAST!"

THE ARGOSY.

AUGUST, 1886.

LADY VALERIA.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LADY VALERIA'S LAST VISITOR.

"DADDY," said Hester, perching herself on Sir John's knee, "I want you to do something for me."

"What sort of something? Must it be done now, or may I get my tea first?"

They were in Sir John's own special sanctum; a matted little den at the back of the house, with bits of old barrack furniture about, piles of newspapers neatly filed, pipes and sticks. Here he read, smoked, and did bits of carpentering with Hester; and here she had brought him his tea, having a boon to beg, and knowing by experience the atmosphere to be propitious. The General was now reposing in his own big chair, with his own special huge china tea-cup steaming on the low bamboo table at his elbow, when between it and him Hester interposed herself.

"That tea is too hot for mortal lips yet. Listen Daddy. I want you to take me to pay a visit."

"Pay visits! Ugh! I thought we were to have a ride this evening. There's a little mare I saw to-day I should like to see you on, Het. Brabant *would* buy her, though she's no more up to Mrs. B.'s weight than a grasshopper."

"I wouldn't change Tom-tit for all Tattersall's, and you know it. You are only trying to evade the question. Will you take me somewhere, and soon—before Mamma comes home? *Do—o—o* say 'Yes,' Daddy!" and Hester smoothed his grey moustache daintily with her finger-tips and put a kiss on it.

"Where's it to be?" enquired Sir John, resignedly, looking at her with delighted eyes.

"I want to go and see Mabel Brant. Mamma won't go. It's no

use waiting to ask her. She would make a fuss about the etiquette of calling and say she doesn't know Lady Valeria Meynell, or something."

Sir John put her off his knee and rose hastily. He crossed the room to the window and stood looking out at nothing, with his face turned away from his astonished little daughter.

"Lady—*who* did you say? What's *she* got to do with your friends?" he asked, clearing his throat.

"She's Mabel's mother. She has lent them her house during the session. Lord Charlie is member for Southport," Hester answered, amazed.

Sir John did not speak for awhile, then muttering something about "the weather holding up," he returned to his chair and began stirring his tea with an unsteady hand, sending it splashing over into the saucer.

"Hold up? Of course it will hold up, for days to come. Why not, Daddy?" But he only put the tea to his lips and set it down untasted, and a second time crossed the room and stood with his back to her.

"What relation is your de Cressy to the Meynells?" he asked, in an elaborately casual manner.

"Lady Valeria is his cousin. Do you know her, Daddy?"

"I? Not I! How the deuce should I know her? Confound that tea. I've burnt my mouth."

"Daddy," spoke Hester, impressively, "don't try to deceive me. You have done so once or twice in your life and have always been sorry after—haven't you? If you don't want to take me to see Mabel say so, and I'll trust you for the reason, but don't pretend you haven't got one. It was the fib burnt your mouth, not the tea."

"I declare to you, Hester, I don't know Lady Valeria from Adam!"

"I should think you might though—if you saw the two together," was the calm rejoinder.

"And I'll take you there whenever you please—as soon as you can get ready. There!"

Hester waited for no second thoughts. She was at the door in visiting array as soon as the hansom.

Sir John was absolutely silent the whole way till they turned into Seagrave Place.

"Shall we see Lady Valeria, Het?" he asked, pulling his moustache meditatively. "If there's any chance of that I won't go in."

"Why, are you afraid of her?"

"No, little girl. You must trust me for my reasons as you said just now."

Lady Charles Brant was at home, sitting disconsolately in the open drawing-room window, arrayed in sad green, with a lapful of Art needle-work. She sent crewels and patterns showering to the ground

when Hester was announced, and came flying to the door to receive her.

"You *angel!*" she cried, with a headlong rush that nearly landed her in Sir John's arms. "I mean you, Hester, of course," adjusting her glasses, which had as usual flown over one shoulder in her wild career. "How sweet of you to come! I'll get you into focus presently. I was going mad from solitary confinement."

"How is your mother?" asked Hester when they had found seats.

"My dear! how should *I* know? *I'm* never let go near her. If I go to the door she's always either asleep or expecting the doctor. If I *do* get into the room, I'm found to be too exciting and get ordered out again. I know I'm a bad nurse, and am always upsetting things, and can never tell one bottle from another, so I suppose they're right; but it's very miserable all the same. And Charlie is too wretched about the future of the country under Gladstone's administration—we are all rushing to destruction you know—to be able to spare me an atom of sympathy."

Hester condoled with her a little, and then went back to her point. "Is Lady Valeria really too ill to see anyone?" she asked, anxiously.

"I don't know. Perhaps it's only me they object to. Oliver says I nearly killed her by taking her to Folkestone, but she was ready enough to go, and we were very quietly happy together there, till she saw Mr. Poynter one day; and Oliver came down and abused him and me like pickpockets, and took her back to town next morning."

"Oh, Mabel, won't you do me a great great favour!" cried Hester, stung to fresh effort by Edric's name. "Won't you take a message to your mother from me, unless indeed she is too ill to hear it? If she were to die——"

"Die! But does anyone think *that?* I thought Oliver only meant to frighten me. Have *you* heard anything about her? What makes you look so strange?" adjusting her pince-nez with a trembling hand in the effort to read Hester's face. "Have you come to break anything to me?"

"Why, how *could* I?" Hester expostulated. "I only know what you have just been telling me yourself——"

"I haven't seen her to-day," Mabel interrupted, looking at her in affright. "I ought to have insisted on staying this morning, but Constance was so obstinate, and the Kirkpatricks sent for me for quartette practice. Oh, I'm a blind, selfish wretch! I'll go directly. Constance *shan't* keep me out!" And, with a "Wait till I come back," she dashed from the room with a bang of the door that set all the crystal drops ringing on the lustres and the glass shades rattling on their stands.

"Hester, it strikes me that we oughtn't to be here under the circumstances," hazarded Sir John.

"Oh, Daddy, if I only knew what to do! if she isn't really ill I must see her somehow! and if she is,—why it's ten times more necessary," and Hester wrung her hands in an agony of indecision.

"*Must* see her? Must? What's this mystery, my little girl? It's not like you, Het. Come, we'd better go. Visitors can't be wanted here just now." Sir John spoke with his authoritative tone, to which all, even Hester, must needs attend.

"Daddy, dear Daddy, just trust me this once! It's a fair bargain. I'll never ask your reasons for not wanting to meet Lady Valeria if you'll trust mine for wishing to see her. It isn't my affair or I'd tell you in a minute."

Sir John was still looking at her doubtfully, pulling his grey moustache in hesitation, when a sudden outbreak of noise startled both.

A sound of footsteps and voices without, and one voice above all raised in tones of imperative command, and then the door burst open to admit Mabel Brant, who came running up to them all scared and tearful.

"I don't know what to do! I've said something—or else it was Constance—that has agitated her dreadfully. She says such terrible things about our keeping people from her, as if I'd do any such thing! and she has got up and will come down here, and Oliver is to go at once for Mr. Stannard and bring him back. Not our own clergyman, or even Lionel, but this Mr. Stannard! Who *can* he be? And Oliver! Oh, he *is* angry! Oh, I wish Charlie were at home, he wouldn't let me be spoken to in this way." She stopped to wipe her eyes, and listened for a second.

"There, there! she's coming. You won't be offended, but *do* go. They *musn't* find you here!"

The Archdales were as anxious to depart as she was to see them go, and were hastening to the door when she stopped them.

"Not that way. You'll meet her. Go in here and out by the other door when she has passed."

They withdrew accordingly by another door which opened into Lady Valeria's little sitting-room. The footsteps drew nearer, and standing within the doorway Hester could see the whole of the other room reflected in the great glass opposite. A little crowd at the doorway grew distinct as she gazed, and she recognised the tall figure of Lady Valeria half leaning on, half urging forward a woman in the dress of a professional nurse, who looked grimly irresponsible, and followed by Mrs. Meynell anxiously expostulating. Then came a maid with a load of wraps and cushions, and lastly the butler with an air of injured dignity, bearing a silver salver covered with cards.

Hester watched the little procession safely into the room, then softly tried to open the door to the landing. It was locked outside. The whole place had an air of being half dismantled, and the room had doubtless been shut up since Lady Valeria's absence. She noiselessly made Sir John aware of the difficulty.

"We can't get out this way."

"We *must*, Het! What a deuced awkward position! Suppose you or I sneezed ——"

"Perhaps I can signal to Mabel for help," and she crossed back on tip-toe to the drawing-room door again.

Lady Valeria had sunk into a great chair by the window, and someone had flung a scarlet and gold shawl around her, out of which her worn face looked ghastly white. She had ordered the nurse off, and sat listening with a gloomy, absent face to her daughter-in-law's protestations, now and then casting an impatient glance at Lady Charles, who was sobbing on an ottoman in the middle of the room. In the background the butler bore aloft his salver, impassive and unnoticing, as a well-bred butler should be.

"I am not dead yet, Constance, and while I live I will be mistress here," she spoke, feebly and emphatically. "You and Oliver mean well; of course you do; but how should you know who have a right to be admitted to me?" Her voice gave way before she finished speaking. "*What* was that name you said?" she asked the maid, with an effort.

"Name, my lady. Did you say what *name?*" faltering and glancing at Mrs. Meynell for a suggestion. "I don't remember naming *any* name, my lady."

Lady Valeria sat upright suddenly, trembling violently, and deathly pale.

"You are false, false! One and all of you!" she cried, excitedly; then, with a sharp cry of pain, sank back gasping and struggling for breath, beating frantically at Mrs. Meynell when she drew near.

The nurse came back with some restorative which she administered sternly. "If you *will* excite yourself, my lady, I cannot be answerable to Dr. Diarmid for the consequences. Now, hadn't you better come right away up-stairs ——"

"Go away!" commanded Lady Valeria, recovering her composure somewhat; "and you—come here."

The butler approached obediently. His mistress lifted a card or two with a shaking hand from the salver.

"Read them. No. Mabel, come, you read them."

"'D—D—Dr. Moncrieff,' 'Lady Lingard,' 'The Dean of St. Stephen's and Lady Agatha Pratt,' 'Mr. Beverley-Bateman,'" she read, wiping her eyes between each name as she put down the card. Her mother sat listening fixedly, her eyes glancing furtively, now at the cards, now at her daughter-in-law's face, now dropped on her own restless fingers, fraying and picking at the gold fringe of her shawl. "Is that all?" she asked, when Mabel had reached the last.

"That is all, my lady, excepting Mr. Stannard's, which Mr. Meynell took up to you himself, and the gentleman's which, through some mismanagement, came into Miss Harris's hands unknown to me." A

toss of the head from Miss Harris repaid the accent of disparagement accompanying the last words.

"Is he coming?" asked Lady Valeria, restlessly turning her head to the window. "How long is it since Oliver went?"

"Not long, mamma. He might possibly overtake him. It was not many minutes after his call that Oliver started," Mrs. Meynell replied, soothingly. Lady Valeria only sighed impatiently.

"I want him. I want him to help me. I have something I must tell you all before I die. He knows it, and shall speak for me. I thought he would come to me. I have waited and waited for him. Harris, did you say no other name beside his?"

"My lady, if I was to die for it, I couldn't bring to mind that I said anything. I may have been speaking of visitors to Lady Charles, my lady," said Harris, fibbing industriously, with an eye to a possible situation with Mrs. Meynell, not to speak of a certain douceur from Mr. Oliver.

Lady Valeria turned her head away in sad scorn. "It cannot matter much now," she muttered. "I had a fancy that someone was near me who has the best right to be here. I should like to have died with my hand in his." Constance looked in bewilderment at the nurse, who touched her own forehead and shook her head from behind the chair. "Mr. Stannard shall tell you all."

"I'll go and watch for him, mamma," and Mrs. Meynell gladly hurried away to the more distant window, while Mabel sank down on her knees beside her mother and held her hand.

There was a long interval of silence in the room, endless it seemed to the two involuntary spectators. The nurse, after a few ineffectual suggestions, sat silently watching her charge. The servants had been ordered away out of hearing by Mrs. Meynell, who stood motionless at her post. Mabel sobbed and caressed the hand she held quietly.

Lady Valeria leaned back in her chair, her eyes fixed absently on the narrow sky above the roofs. A lingering ray of western sun slanted across her, catching the splendours of her scarlet and gold embroideries and the glancing diamonds on her fingers. It was reflected in a soft glow on her wasted features, over which a great peace seemed to be slowly settling. As the golden light slowly travelled away from her, her lips even seemed to tremble into a smile, and her eyelids drooped restfully.

There was a sound of wheels, and Constance hastened away to meet the new-comers.

"Mabel," spoke Lady Valeria, very softly, "I have lost the name. It has gone from me. Mr. Stannard will tell you. He was here—not so long ago—and they turned him away."

"Mamma, dear! You are mistaken, indeed. No one has been here. Nobody but Hester and Sir John Archdale——"

"John Archdale!" The name rang through the room like a trumpet call, startling the listeners without, and staying Oliver's foot

on the threshold. She had sprung to her feet and stood erect, her head thrown back, her arms extended, her face alight with sudden rapturous expectation.

"John Archdale! He has come to me at last. At last!" Then with a choking cry she sank back, a white, rigid figure that should never give word or sign in this world again while its life should last.

They came crowding in, nurse, servants, her children, and the hastily summoned doctor. They made her a couch with pillows where she had fallen, and there, amongst the Louis Quatorze gildings and great sheets of shining mirrors, she lay breathing away her last moments, senseless and motionless.

Hester and her father passed unnoticed through the room, and stood without with Eustace Stannard till the Doctor's fruitless ministrations should be over.

"I am John Archdale," said the old General. "Yes, it was my name she called. Poor lady, poor lady!" shaking his kindly old head, and laying his arm round Hester's shoulders tenderly.

Dr. Diarmid rose at last, and came to the door.

"I can do no more for the poor lady, Stannard. She's past minding you, but if you like to try the effect of your priestly offices there's no objection."

Then Hester heard Mabel's voice upraised in a wild outburst of hysterical sobbing, and then, in a pause, the grave tones of Eustace Stannard speaking the Benediction.

"Peace be to this house."

"Amen!" said good old Sir John fervently, as he led his little daughter gently away.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW OLIVER MEYNELL CAME TO ST. FRIDOLIN'S.

A DAY of steady, softly falling rain.

Far away in the country, in the old family vault of the Meynells, Lady Valeria that morning had been laid to her rest. Eustace and de Cressy, newly returned from the funeral, sat in the Vicar's study, making up the morning's arrears of work somewhat languidly and disjointedly, feeling that disinclination to set to anything that a broken day brings forth.

"What brought Sir John Archdale down there, I wonder?" de Cressy asked, as he rose to go. "What has he to do with the Meynells?" He glanced out of the window, where the rain-drops fell thicker and thicker against the pane. "There's a hansom stopping outside," he announced, without waiting for a reply to his first remark, trying to peer through the streaming glass. "I'd better go."

The Vicar heard him putting himself inside his rattling mackintosh in the hall, and soon after a surprised exclamation, "Hullo,

Oliver! *You* here," followed by the entrance of two gentlemen: the first Mr. Meynell, the second, as he had learned that morning, Lord Charles Brant.

Lord Charles was a small, quiet man, with a soft, positive manner. Mr. Meynell introduced him, and left him to explain their presence there, which he did promptly enough.

"I think I am right, Mr. Stannard, in assuming you to have been to a great extent in Lady Valeria Meynell's confidence?" he began, in a clear little voice, low pitched but incisive. Eustace bowed assent.

"We have made a curious discovery amongst her papers. Mr. Meynell, I should tell you, does not attach any importance to it; *I do;* and for *my* satisfaction we have come to you for any assistance you can give us."

"I have been, against my own will, made the recipient of some details of Lady Valeria's personal history," Eustace interposed; "but I tell you candidly, gentlemen, it must be a strong necessity that opens my lips on the subject."

Mr. Meynell, whose eyes had been watching him eagerly since he began to speak, drew a breath of relief, but kept silence.

"That necessity unfortunately exists," Lord Charles went on, in his cool little tone. Will you oblige me by reading this, which we discovered attached loosely to Lady Valeria's deed of settlement," handing a sheet of note-paper folded lengthwise to the Vicar, "and tell us whether you can throw any light upon its meaning."

It was dated the year of Mr. Meynell's death, and ran as follows:

"I, Valeria Mary Meynell, do charge and implore my son, Oliver Meynell, to refrain from exercising any rights given to him by this deed for at least the space of seven years after my death, during which time I beg of him to make diligent search whether anyone exists whom he may be ignorantly defrauding of his birth-right. And I pray him to pardon me for keeping him in ignorance that such a one may exist, as it is done to spare him the torments of doubt that consume me—his wretched mother.

"Valeria Mary Meynell, née de Cressy."

Mr. Stannard read and re-read in silence.

"What do *you* understand by this?" he asked at last.

"Some screw loose about Glenara," Lord Charles answered him, promptly. "Lord Kilmoyne was an unconscionable old scamp in his time. There were all manners of choppings and changes, and buyings and sellings in the last generation, and it would have been very much in his way to swindle the whole Meynell family by keeping an infant heir-at-law in the background. If Lady Valeria suspected it, that explains the mystery. Now I think you cannot honourably refuse to satisfy us whether you have any knowledge of such a possibility."

"Nothing that I can tell will help you," replied Eustace, thoughtfully, inwardly giving thanks for Lord Charles's neat little theory,

which might serve to divert his speculations from a more dangerous direction. He had decided after one moment's anxious debate that Oliver Meynell must know his mother's story, hard as the telling would be, but he could have wished for any other time or place. Mr. Meynell might be a cold, precise, self-sufficient prig, but he had been a good son, and the earth was lying fresh on his mother's coffin. "Shall you set any further enquiries on foot?"

"No," spoke Meynell, abruptly, "certainly not!"

"Then *I* must," declared Lord Charles. "It concerns the honour of the family. I accept it as a sacred charge."

"The family honour should be as safe in my hands as in yours, Charles," spoke Meynell, with sudden anger. "I have given way to you once in coming here, but, by Heaven, I go no farther!" He rose to go. Lord Charles did not budge. His eyes were fixed keenly on Eustace, who felt that a further reply was required of him.

"I am sorry I cannot satisfy you. I can guess the idea with which this was written, and I can assure you that I firmly believe that idea to have been a false one. There you must leave it."

"Out of respect to the secrets of the confessional?" Lord Charles asked, in a tone that was just restrained from being a sneer.

"If you like to put it in that way," the Vicar replied, gravely.

Lord Charles's quick temper was one of the two disturbing elements in Lord Charles's well-regulated, orderly little life. The other was Mabel; but he never allowed either to get beyond his control for long.

"Then, as you say, there we must leave it," he assented, with a forced, courteous smile. "We have no more to ask; have we, Meynell?"

"*I* have," said the banker, unexpectedly, without moving; "if Mr. Stannard can spare me a few minutes."

Lord Charles looked inquisitive, waited to be invited to stay, failing that, bade adieu and left them.

The grey afternoon had darkened in the pause, and the rain-drops dripped heavily from roof and cornice.

"It *must* come now," said Eustace to himself; "he suspects something, and I may never get such another opportunity." Yet he felt he would have given a day of his life to have been spared the telling of that story.

"I see you have become aware of a distressing family secret," began the banker, to Eustace's surprise and relief. "I thank you for respecting it just now. You understood the dilemma which the discovery of that paper placed me in—I mean Brant's knowledge of that discovery. I must either act as if I really believed it worth attention, or go into explanations which, for Mabel's sake, I would gladly avoid."

"You are quite convinced that it is not worth attention?" the Vicar was provoked into enquiring by the coolness of the other's manner.

Mr. Meynell turned to him with eyebrows slightly raised.

"My father was an excellent man of business, not at all likely to let even Lord Kilmoyne jockey him in the fashion Brant suspects. He saw his title to Glenara clear before he sank one penny in the place you may depend. Now we may consider that as disposed of."

"Not yet. Your mother, I know, had at one time a strong conviction that—that there was a prior claim to yours, though you were supposed to be her eldest son."

An awkward, feeble way of putting it; yet surely it would elicit some outbreak of surprise or question. The Vicar sat expectant with down-bent eyes, listening for the next words that should fall from his companion's lips. None came, and he raised his own eyes to Meynell's face, ashen grey in the grey twilight, bitterly chagrined, but still unsurprised, incurious.

"Poor soul! Poor mother!" he sighed, tenderly. "Did you really give any credence to her wandering fancies? Before strangers she was usually self-controlled; indeed I thought it was a secret known only to my father and myself that she was ever otherwise. Even Mabel suspects nothing. It is only recently that I have detected any return of the old trouble. She never gave way in my father's presence; he had immense influence over her; he educated her in fact, formed her mind and character, and she made him a noble helpmate. There was no natural deficiency of intellect. She had a terrible shock in her early girlhood ——"

"Her husband's death?" interrupted Eustace.

"Ha? You knew that? How?" eagerly.

"From Lady Valeria herself. I do not think *that* was a mere wandering fancy, nor yet the rest of her sad history. I knew nothing personally of your mother till she came to me, and of her own accord told me the piteous story. Also"—here the Vicar's voice sank and faltered—"she employed me to discover whether her eldest son—her son by her first marriage—were alive or dead."

"*Her son!*" My elder brother! Her son by her first marriage?" Mr. Meynell demanded, hesitatingly, a new expression dawning in his face of alarm mixed with incredulity. "Did you believe it? Were there grounds for any belief in such a thing?"

"You shall judge for yourself. You shall hear what passed between us as well as I can recall it. I have some cipher notes of my first interview with Lady Valeria made that same evening in my diary, and I can trust my memory for the rest."

They lay in his desk under his hand with Arbuthnot Corbett's letters. He took them out and read them at length. Mr. Meynell, except for a pertinent question or two, listening in absolute silence. The gloom deepened outside, the raindrops pattered thicker and faster as the Vicar read. When at last he ceased Mr. Meynell was only a black outline against the bare, white wall, with folded arms and down-bowed head.

"Poor mother! Poor mother!" he sighed at last, softly, in the gloom. "What she must have suffered in concealing this. Why could she not have trusted me?" he broke out, in a tone that was full of sorrow and hurt feeling. "Forgive me—but it seems hard that you—a stranger—should have had this task which was of right mine."

"It came easier to a stranger, perhaps."

"I don't know what more I could have done either," Oliver resumed, after a pause of consideration. "That man's—Stephen Magrath's—death has saved me from a decision. I may leave the mystery unsolved. Had he lived it would have been my duty to seek him out and examine into his claims, now there is no need that the subject should ever again be revived; even Brant need know nothing about it," with a sparkle of satisfaction in his tone. You have acted with singular discretion and good-feeling, Mr. Stannard. I am at a loss for words to express my sense of the service you have done our family. As I plainly told you I have been extremely annoyed by the influence you seemed to have acquired over my mother, and have been doing all in my power to counteract it—I want you to see why I endeavoured to keep you apart. In this case I admit I have been wrong."

"I think you have," was the reply to this magnanimous concession. "Fatally wrong—as far as your own interests are concerned. You left her by so doing entirely at the mercy of this mysterious agent—this Madame Euphrosyne—or Girard—as I suppose her name to be. I do not know what other family secrets may have been confided to her, but I think you may expect her to trade upon her knowledge at the first opportunity."

Meynell looked sceptical. "She would not dare." He evidently considered the subject disposed of. Then searching in his pocket for something: "I want you to look at a photograph I have here, and tell me if you know the original."

Eustace took it from him. It was a large one, once coloured, but faded as by much handling.

"I believe I do. I can't be sure though. It's like a man whom I have met once or twice—Poynter, of the Royal Denbigh." Meynell nodded. "Why, your mother knew him. I met him just outside your house not long ago, the very day she died, and he gave me a curious message. He seemed put out about something."

"This photograph, Mr. Stannard, was fastened into the leaves of the Bible in which my mother read every day, and with this gentleman she had a private interview, evidently a distressing one, at Folkestone, on the night before her return. He came to the house with a wild sort of story on the day you saw him. Now, Mr. Stannard, can you help me to any explanation of this?"

"Not in any way. Believe me I have withheld nothing from you. Your mother never mentioned his name to me."

Mr. Meynell drew a long breath of relief. "I was not always able to be with her, and I imagine in my absence she gave way to unaccountable freaks of liking and disliking people. This may have been one of them. I think I had better see this gentleman at once, and find out the extent of his intimacy with my mother. I will write.—No, I'll go to Shorncliffe at once and see him. He may have been led to form some expectations from my mother's fancy for him. I should like to carry out her wishes as far as is reasonable." He spoke more briskly than he had yet done, and looked for approval to Eustace, on whom, singularly enough, misgivings seemed to be deepening as they lightened for the other.

"Then that's the last point disposed of?"

"Not quite. There is still Madame Euphrosyne."

"Let her show her face to me and I shall have very little scruple in handing her over to the nearest policeman. I shall take care to be prepared at all points. I shall despatch a confidential agent to America to go exhaustively into the Magraths' history, and another to Ireland to make further enquiries amongst the old tenants—if any survive. Lord Kilmoyne's papers are all in my solicitor's hands. I shall examine them carefully for any details of my mother's first marriage—you know how it was a piece of my grandfather's mad folly never to acknowledge it openly? I have never even heard her first husband's name—have you?"

"Never. She desired to keep it from me. She spoke of him as 'Jack'—nothing more."

Eustace for the first time evaded the other's look. He was closing his understanding obstinately against a sudden fancy that had started up, wild, extravagant and horrible.

"I shall be glad to have it all out!" Meynell went on, almost cheerily. "It's half-told bits of family history and half-hidden family secrets that are the materials for an impostor's case. Depend upon it I shall go into the matter thoroughly."

"It's an ugly business, having to exhume a corpse or a dead secret sometimes," was Eustace's gloomy comment.

"But necessary now and then, eh? When it hasn't been decently buried and the ghost takes to walking?" Oliver picked up his hat in excellent spirits at his own smartness. "Good-bye, Mr. Stannard, you and I will have the satisfaction of knowing that *this* skeleton is securely put away at last, without a chance of resurrection."

CHAPTER XXX.

"COME, LASSES AND LADS!"

LADY VALERIA passed from men's minds before rain and sun and creeping green mould had dimmed the freshness of the mason's work that closed her into the great vault of the Meynells' at Rivington. Her deeds lived after her in the lives of others for good or evil; much of the first—more than has been hinted at here—sufficient it is to be hoped to out-weigh what there might be of the latter. Her death was deplored in many a sermon preached on the following Sunday; in the *Times* obituary; and in the reports of a score of charities. Mabel Brant cried for two whole days without intermission, and then went, cast down but not inconsolable, in strict incognita, with a few kindred spirits, to the great Midlandshire Musical Festival. And Oliver, after telling Lord Charles as much of Eustace's story as it was good for him to know, set to work steadily to dispose of the family skeleton as he had proposed, collecting its scattered bones, so to speak, and preparing to read the Burial Service over it. Eustace was doing his best to forget it all as speedily as he could. He caught himself wondering once or twice whether he should ever hear the result of Meynell's visit to Shorncliffe, and he felt a curious repugnance to meeting the Archdales, which he decided must be overcome at once, without question.

A great friendliness had been slowly but surely growing up between the ex-rivals in Rose's regard. Hester could afford to cast aside her jealousy of the Vicar now that Rose was as hopelessly lost to him as to her. Some dim suggestion of the truth was growing up in her mind that made her guard her words more carefully when Rose and her friends came under discussion, and thrill with pity when she caught the sudden light in his eyes when the name passed her lips.

Many messages anent St. Fridolin and its concerns came to Hester. Once or twice a formal one direct to him, always received with inordinate secret rejoicing, despite himself. He emptied the vials of his own self-contempt on his head as he thought of it, and then began to wonder, as he entered the Archdales' drawing-room, whether there had been time for another letter to have been received since his last visit. Lady Archdale received him. She gently discoursed about the weather and her headaches, and at last calmly mentioned and glided over "that sad affair at the Meynells'," to the relief of both her hearers. Hester had entered meanwhile, with a foreign letter in her hand he felt convinced.

"How do your Saturday evening lectures prosper?" he asked, his eyes determinedly averted.

"Just what Rose wants to know, and I don't know how to answer. We had Miss Coutell here at luncheon in the worst possible spirits.

The girls *won't* take an intelligent interest in 'Art, Hygiene and Domestic Economy.' They all seem to be drifting apart again, and I can't help it. They miss Rose so woefully."

Mr. Stannard looked sympathetic, but did not trust himself to speak.

"That dreadful bank-holiday!" she went on. "Last Whit-monday Rose only took the friendless girls with her, you know. This time she wants them all to join, and I don't believe the place exists that will suit them. Most of them want the country, or the seaside, or, as a compromise, the river. Little Lydia Hicks—the pale girl with a pocket always bulging out with penny dreadfuls—is yearning for ruins, or a castle, and has infected some of the others. Lotty begs for a band and fireworks, and so do half-a-dozen others. Must we try Rosherville? Will you chaperon us, mother, if Mr. Stannard and Mr. de Cressy come too?"

"Indeed, Hester, you must leave them to themselves in any case. I can't think of your going anywhere with twenty girls in a gang on a bank-holiday!"

"It does seem an unmanageable undertaking," Hester admitted with a sigh. "But Rose trusted them to me, and I know they'll all do whatever I suggest. Only I haven't a suggestion left in me. Or if I had a plan I don't know how I could carry it out."

From her babyhood upwards, nobody had ever heard such a frank confession of total incapacity from Hester's lips before. Even Lady Archdale was startled and touched.

"My dear, I really wish I could help you," she began.

"I think I see my way," spoke Eustace suddenly. "If *you* really will help us, Lady Archdale, *that*," with an inspiration of diplomacy, "would remove the only obstacle in the way."

Lady Archdale looked interested but neutral. She was at heart always glad to please Hester, when she was sure it could be done without involving personal exertion or violation of her own precise little code of social laws.

"Don't you think a day at Altcar might suit all views? We have river enough for a water party, and the ruins of Ingilby Castle within a walk. Then there are the gardens and conservatories to see, and, now I think of it, there is the Foresters' Fête coming off somewhere in the neighbourhood, so even a band and fireworks might prove attainable."

Hester clapped her hands delightfully.

Lady Archdale began to demur. "But your mother ——"

"Will you let me write and consult her? I am very sure, though, that *your* party will be more than welcome."

"*My* party!" Lady Archdale seemed to shy at the responsibility at first, but being gently led to approach and examine it, ended by allowing herself to be saddled therewith. Then they fell to discussing details and calculating postal deliveries till they finally settled that

the Vicar's scheme, if practicable, might be presented in form to the audience of Miss Coutell's next Saturday evening lecture, time being short and precious. The plan was suggested by an impulse of sheer good-nature on Eustace's part, and of all concerned he was the one who cared least about the expedition; yet, oddly enough, in the result, that day's work was to have no small bearing on his life's future bliss or bale.

His letter to Altcar brought forth the response he had calculated on, in the shape of a telegram of welcome followed by a perfectly rapturous epistle from Mary Liddell, closely written, many paged, and filled with much matter for reflection of various sorts.

"I am so glad that you are coming, if only that you may tell me whether I am fanciful in seeing a change in Lord Altcar. He seems to me to have grown strangely restless, talks oddly about the property, and wearies for news of Randolf.

"Mr. Renwick says such anxiety is only natural just now. We have many fears and little news of Randolf. His wife indeed writes, but not reassuringly. Her last letter was full of indignation at 'everybody' —the Southsea everybody—'expecting her to decline an invitation to a Fancy Dress Ball, under the circumstances.' N.B. The circumstances, whatever they might be, were too unimportant to mention."

Eustace stopped to smile at this scintillation of feminine malice in Mary's gentle little chronicle.

"Mr. Renwick speaks quite severely about poor Mrs. Randolf. He declares that her place is here, that the house and the parish want a lady at their head, and you know, dear Mr. Stannard, I could not put myself forward to be that. Mr. Renwick had found a trained lady-nurse for your mother, a Mrs. Burnett, an officer's widow. She has lost her only son in Afghanistan, and when she speaks of him I can see a look in your mother's eyes that tells me she is thinking of her own boy in Alexandria and the perils that may surround him. This makes a great bond of union between them, so that I might almost consider my occupation gone. Dear Esmée is undoubtedly the better for the change in every way, and I am happy and thankful to be superseded thus. As Mr. Renwick said in a beautiful sermon last Sunday ——"

"Renwick indeed!" Eustace broke off, with a laugh. "Five Mr. Renwicks in a page! This must be seen to."

The letter ended "Send me the names of all the girls. I want to send a proper invitation to each. I have already written in Esmée's name to Lady Archdale, so I hope we have compromised her beyond all possibility of retreat."

Lady Archdale did look finally and helplessly committed to the undertaking when she and Hester appeared on the following Saturday evening, a few minutes before the gathering of Miss Coutell's audience in the parish room.

To them entered presently the Vicar with a handful of cream-tinted, gold-bedight envelopes, one of which he presented to the little lecturess.

She laughed and read it, and shook her wise little head. "It's uncommonly kind of your people to wish for the pleasure of my company, but my vision of a holiday doesn't contain the shadow of a girl in it." She was going to pocket it, but stopped with a stony stare at the card that struck Eustace with terror.

"Anything wrong? Do let me see it. 'Miss Coutell and friend.' I suppose my father thought you might wish to bring somebody. Isn't it right? We are old-world, out-of-the-world people at Altcar."

"Well," and the little lady sighed resignedly, "you will have to make it very clear that it means a female friend, that's all.

"Must I?" he enquired, dubiously. "I don't think any limit was intended."

"There may be brothers," hazarded Lady Archdale, perplexed.

"They can't be brothers to all the other girls."

"Let us accept the situation," spoke Eustace, daringly. "There may be sweethearts. Why not?"

Lady Archdale looked at Miss Coutell, Miss Coutell looked at Lady Archdale. Then both looked at the Vicar with a gaze under which even he wavered, but Hester made reply for him.

"I suppose I might go with a sweetheart, if I had one. Why not the girls? I will answer for the good behaviour of every one. There are all sorts among them, I know, but Lady Altcar agrees to accept all sorts, and I am sure they will be alike in this, not a girl will bring forward anybody who won't do her credit—for Rose's sake."

It was getting time to decide, for approaching voices were heard without, and Mrs. Goodliffe bustled in with a message to the Vicar.

Before anyone could interfere, Hester had picked up her invitation, and handed it to her.

Down to the ground curtsied the worthy soul at the sight of the cream-and-gold compliment paid her, hastily rummaging for her spectacles. "And a friend! That is thoughtful now!" she exclaimed. "If I might take the liberty, ma'am, Miss Sparks—most respectable—has charge of warehouses ——"

"May they all prove to be respectable Miss Sparkses," was Miss Coutell's comment, as the door opened and the first of her audience entered.

So the invitations were distributed, and replies requested to be sent in not later than the following Saturday.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"MISSING."

ALL the girls were ready with their replies long before the week was out, and the Vicar, glancing over the list, smiled to himself to see how Hester's confidence had been justified. Saddest of all seemed the few girls who had no friend to bring. More than half the rest brought other girls, sisters, fellow-workers. "Mother" came in two or three cases, and in one "Grannie" vouched for as being equal to anything in the way of gaiety. Of the dreaded men-friends there came a father, a doubtful uncle, and two brothers. There remained three, unquestionably engaged to their fair introducers, but, as after close enquiry nothing else could be found against them, the Vicar thought that might be over-looked. Altogether he did not fear to present himself with the list at Lady Archdale's.

He made a solemn resolution that Rose's name should not pass his lips this time, if he could possibly help it, and kept sternly away from Hester and her tea-cups for at least ten minutes.

"Look at my Edelweiss," Hester said, suddenly. "Did you ever see such over-rated stuff?"

"From Mrs. Damien?" he asked, his eyes greedily devouring the fluffy, weedy contents of the box she was opening.

"Not exactly. It doesn't grow on the Boulevards. Why, you heard me telling Miss Coutell on Saturday—or if you didn't it was because you *wouldn't* listen," was Hester's mental parenthesis—"Rose is in Paris."

He waited to hear more, with a look which Hester was beginning dimly to understand.

"They had got as far as Stachelberg. Lady Monchalsea broke down suddenly, nobody knows what ailed her, and nobody knew what to do with her, till Rose, with her usual taste for making a social martyr of herself, actually brought her back to Paris; only just in time as it happened. There is a doctor there whom she had consulted before, and he says a second attack might have prevented her travelling home at all. Of course Teddy Boughton is in attendance on his mother," with a malicious glance at the Vicar's impassive countenance.

"And Professor Montrose?" he asked, though his heart seemed to stand still with the effort.

"Professor Montrose is on his way—to the Danube," she ended, her last words lost in the bustle of her mother's entrance.

She was in a greater flutter than usual this day. Her consent had already been many a time repented, and as the day drew near, her misgivings multiplied beyond all her daughter's powers of reassurance.

When some vexed point had been settled finally for the twentieth time, the Vicar rose to go.

"Sir John's compliments and will you please see him for a few minutes before your leave," said Markham, appearing at the door.

"What can Daddy want with you?" wondered Hester. "You know he has begged off going! Perhaps it's to ask to be taken now. He's ashamed to come to me."

Sir John was standing at the foot of the stairs. "I want you for a minute," he said, without other greeting. "Hush! come this way." Eustace followed in obedient silence to the little back room, where Sir John carefully closed the door and locked it before speaking a word. He took a newspaper out of his pocket, and began to unfold it with an unsteady hand.

"I've been regularly upset by a piece of news here. It's a local paper that someone has sent me. It'll all be in the *Times* to-morrow, and I'm at my wits' end how to keep it from them. You know what Amelia is—and to think we only saw the poor lad a few days ago. There, there, read it for yourself. He was a friend of yours, wasn't he? or of Mrs. Damien's—you're all in the same boat—Poor boy! Poor boy!" Sir John pushed the paper towards Eustace with a sort of groan, and dropped heavily into his chair. He, turning to a conspicuously marked column, read in large type:

"MYSTERIOUS OCCURRENCE."

and below:—

"DISAPPEARANCE OF AN OFFICER OF THE ROYAL DENBIGH. LATEST PARTICULARS.

"Much excitement has been caused in Shorncliffe and its neighbourhood by the sudden disappearance of a well-known and popular young Officer, Lieut. Poynter, of the Royal Denbigh regiment, which left the camp yesterday for Portsmouth en route for Egypt. Last Monday the missing gentleman went up to town, it is ascertained for the purpose of making some last preparations. He was seen at two shops. (Names and addresses in full.) At the latter he mentioned that he should return to Shorncliffe by the six o'clock train, and ordered that a certain parcel should be sent to meet him at the Charing Cross station. He is known to have been at the Army and Navy Stores, and later on at the office of Messrs. Cox and Co. Here he interchanged a few words with a friend, and here we lose all trace of him. The mystery of his absence deepens with each day, and it is now impossible to resist the conclusion that only some serious fatality or foul play can account for it. Mr. Poynter was the second son of the late Dean of Leominster. His elder brother is attaché to the embassy at St. Petersburg."

Lower down came,

"FURTHER PARTICULARS.—The gentleman who last saw Mr. Poynter was Major Power, of the Engineers. He informs us that he walked from Craig's Court towards the City with the ill-fated gentleman as far as the Bank, where they parted: Major Power to meet a friend at Liverpool Street, and Mr. Poynter to keep a business appointment—in Lombard Street—according to Major Power's belief."

"What do you make of it?" demanded Sir John, hardly giving Eustace time to glance over it. "Confound these papers with their

penny-a-lining bloodthirsty suggestions. Nothing *could* happen to a man in Lombard Street on a Monday afternoon. Unless he was run over and carried off insensible. By Jove! that might account for it, though. Why don't they try the hospitals first? If I could only get off quietly, I'd run down to Shorncliffe and say a word to the Colonel. I forgot though—they're at Portsmouth by this time. That fool of an editor! He daren't have put that trash in if Borrodale had been about. It'll be all over the country in a day or two." Sir John looked up appealingly in Eustace's face. "What am I to tell Amelia?—and Hetty? She'll be as sorry as I am. We both took a liking to that boy. So like what his father was at his age. My old friend Welbore—No, that was his uncle; I'm always forgetting —Poor lad, poor lad!"

"Lombard Street?" said the Vicar, inattentively. "Have you a Post Office Directory here?"

Sir John looked almost wrathful. "There, on that shelf. What the deuce has that to do with poor Poynter?"

"Not much, I am afraid; but it may help us to one point. 'Bankers.' Here it is. 'Meynell, Meynell and Mott, Lombard Street.' I thought so. Sir John I think I can perhaps carry the trace of your friend one step farther. It's only a chance. I am making a guess at where he might have gone after parting with Major Power. I can go and ask the question at any rate."

"You'll come back at once, or telegraph?"

"Don't expect too much. Whatever I find you shall know of it."

"Good luck to you. I shall say nothing to Amelia or Hetty till I see you again. If I'm only let keep it to myself, that is."

Eustace started off with no very clear idea of what he expected to learn from Mr. Meynell. He had wondered once or twice what the result of the banker's meeting with Edric had been, but had been quite content to hear no more of the matter. Now, he felt he knew enough to justify at least an enquiry; Meynell himself would hardly deny that.

Mr. Meynell was in his private office and disengaged. He looked ill and worn, and pushed aside some papers, as he rose to greet Eustace, with an impatient sigh, as if this interruption were only one more care added to the burden under which he laboured. Eustace had no desire to prolong the infliction, and came at once to the point, assisted by the fact that a daily paper with a marked paragraph uppermost lay on the table before him.

"Young Poynter's disappearance?" replied the banker, wearily, to his first remark. "Yes, of course I have heard of it. Most extraordinary thing—but you are the second person who has been here to-day about it. The other came from Scotland Yard, I believe. *Why*, unless they are making a house to house visitation throughout Lombard Street, I can't conceive."

"Then you have no reason to suspect Mr. Poynter was coming here on that day?"

"My dear sir, why *should* he come here? Oh, I see, you are thinking of our last interview. Yes—yes, I certainly expressed an intention then of making his acquaintance."

"You certainly expressed more interest in him then than you do now," said the Vicar, and then felt himself to be uncivil, as he always did sooner or later in Mr. Meynell's company.

He did not seem offended, but passed his hand wearily over his forehead. "So many things have happened since then. I have had much to occupy my mind—harassing, vexatious matters. You must forgive me if I did not at once recall all the circumstances you allude to. Yet it is not so long ago, either. It was the day—the day of my mother's funeral."

Something in his face and manner always became, if not more conciliatory, at least less ungenial, whenever he alluded to his mother, or to Eustace's connection with her. "Let me think. I had an impression, you know, that he might prove a sort of—of protégé of my mother's. Someone she had taken a chance fancy to. I was prevented from going to see him as I intended, and when I went down to Shorncliffe on Tuesday he had, as you see, already gone."

"Gone, but where? Did you make no enquiries?"

"How could I tell," replied Oliver, rather snappishly. "And what could I do? I saw his Colonel, who didn't seem quite to know what to do either. He said Mr. Poynter had asked for leave some short time previously—said that nothing under a week would do, didn't get it, and there, I imagine, you have the whole explanation. He has simply gone off without it; and there the matter might have ended but for the genius of the local reporter who couldn't let such a chance of a sensation slip."

"Mr. Poynter will owe him no thanks, if that is the case. Nor his friends either. I have just come from the Archdales. The old General is in great tribulation about it."

"After all, I dare say he isn't the first officer in the world who has been absent without leave for a day or two."

"It is unfortunate for him that he should have happened to select this particular moment," said Eustace, trying to reconcile himself to the banker's view. "It will look bad, won't it?"

"Oh, he'll get back in time for the start, never fear. The whole thing might have been overlooked if it had only been kept quiet. Now——" Meynell shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, it's a pity. He was a fine young fellow. Good-bye, and thanks."

Mr. Meynell held out his hand readily, but drew it back with an exclamation of impatience as a quick little step was heard outside and, with the merest formality in the shape of a knock for admission, the door opened to admit the boyish figure of Lord Charles Brant.

"Sorry to intrude, Oliver, but I've something to say which won't keep a day longer than we can help. Good-day, Mr. Stannard. You are the very person I could have wished to find here," he began, with his usual soft rapidity of speech. "Now, have either of you seen this?" producing an evening paper from his pocket. "Ah, yes, I see you have it there. How did you get it?"

"If you mean the account of Mr. Poynter's escapade, I can assure you my attention has been concentrated on it since mid-day to-day. I have had little chance of turning to any other subject," his brother-in-law answered, with a pettish attempt at gaiety. "That paper was bestowed on me by a detective who came to make enquiries here; Heaven only knows why."

"I do, too. I sent him."

"You did!" Meynell's face grew white with sudden passion. "I—I—can't believe you capable of playing a poor, practical joke on me, Charles."

"No. That sort of thing isn't in my line," Lord Charles went on, staying his further indignant speech by a deprecatory sign with his hand. "Least of all at present or on this subject. It is a very serious business, Oliver."

"I don't see why it should be—to us."

"No, I don't imagine you do just yet, but you'll change your opinion when you hear what I have got to say. Did you ever hear that our late mother had been specially interested in this very Mr. Poynter?"

Meynell looked as if he would like to have denied it, but with Eustace's eyes upon him and the photograph still in his pocket-book he could but assent.

"I believed so myself at one time, but I find I am mistaken. I have even been down to Shorncliffe to meet him, with no result."

Lord Charles's little suspicious eyes twinkled astonished approval. "I am glad to hear you did that. I'm *uncommonly* glad to hear it. You'll see why, presently. Now you saw that young man yourself one night at Folkestone. Mabel told you about his interview with Lady Valeria——"

"A mere casual visit."

"Hardly. Mabel says from the time her mother arrived there she was always on the watch for someone, day and night."

"But we have no proof that this was Mr. Poynter. Mabel's eyes are rarely trustworthy. It may have been some chance likeness," objected Oliver.

"I admit all that, and that you have had no evidence to go upon, nor had I till Mabel returned to-day from Midlandshire. The people she was staying with there were friends of the Poynters—guardians in fact of the younger boys—and the Colonel telegraphed to them for news of him."

Eustace was beginning to wonder what all this was to lead to, and whether he might not as well depart.

Lord Charles gave him one penetrating look and went on. "I have been since at some pains to trace his movements on that day. I call your attention to them. He came up to town by the train arriving at eleven, and the first place he went to was "— holding up an impressive forefinger— "our house in Seagrave Place. Not to see either Mabel or myself, but because he thought *you* still lived there. He got your address at Queen's Gate and here. He left no name, but the description is unmistakable. Next he went to Queen's Gate. Constance was not at home. Next, he came here."

"Here!" exclaimed Meynell, confounded.

"He saw some deputy's deputy who assured him you had not come in yet, and that you were not expected before three o'clock. (He's a bright youth that, of a fine imagination.) Again he left neither card nor name."

"Why did I not hear of this sooner?"

"Because it never occurred to you to enquire, I suppose. I confess I was somewhat startled myself when facts became clear to me. Now Oliver, here we have this young fellow in close and secret communication with our mother. After her death we have him endeavouring to obtain a private interview with you. *Private*, mind you, or why should he not have written and made an appointment or given his name anywhere? We know that Lady Valeria lives and dies in fear of an unknown claimant to her father's estate. Just recall to your mind the wording of that paper on which we consulted Mr. Stannard on the 11th of last month."

"I recall it perfectly; but you must forgive me if I utterly fail to perceive the slightest connection between the two subjects," said the banker, stiffly.

"And you must forgive me if I decline to shut my eyes to the very obvious connection that exists between them; and now, Mr. Stannard, I appeal to your honour as a gentleman, can you not of your knowledge confirm my view?"

"On my honour as a gentleman I never heard Mr. Poynter's name on Lady Valeria's lips, nor any allusion to him of any kind."

Lord Charles flushed hotly with vexation. "I am bitterly disappointed, I own. I looked to you to supply the missing clue."

"What could you have done with it?" drily enquired Oliver. "Established a motive for the young man's being kidnapped and made away with on his second visit here?" His brother-in-law's disappointment seemed a source of demure gratification. "Will you kindly suggest what course you wish me to pursue for the present. I confess my inability to deal with so complicated and delicate a case; or shall we await Mr. Poynter's return to his duty?"

"I wish you would take this more seriously, Oliver. I am not a lawyer or a detective, but I am pretty sure that either would tell you that if Mr. Poynter *never* returns to his duty Meynell will be a marked name. What are you doing?" For, with an exclama-

tion of impatience, Meynell had taken up a pen and was writing rapidly.

"Expediting that desirable event," he answered, pressing the slip of paper on his blotting-pad and handing it to Lord Charles.

It was a notice of reward: "£100 to anyone who shall give information that may lead to the discovery of Mr. Edric Poynter, &c. &c."

"You are making it very hard for that poor fellow to show his face again, Charles," he said, good-humouredly.

Then Eustace took his leave of them, and returned to bear what comfort he might to poor old Sir John.

Sir John's misgivings had evidently been justified. He had not been allowed to keep his secret to himself. The open newspaper lay upon the table, as if under discussion, when Eustace re-entered the room, and Sir John stood in the window, his back to the room, his shoulders squared and obstinacy expressed in every line of them.

"I tell you, Het, it can't be done. Not by me, at least."

"But something *must* be done, and done by you, Daddy. It's your affair beyond all others'. A friend of ours—an officer in the Royal Denbigh—why, Daddy, what *will* they think of you in the regiment if you make no sign. You must go at once to the Horse Guards."

"Never, Het!" he shouted, so roughly that his daughter started back as if from a blow. "Of course I could make a disturbance if I chose, but I won't. Do you want to ruin the boy? Cut off his last chance? Ah, here's Mr. Stannard. What news?" Sir John listened with a certain dismal complacency as Eustace made his meagre little report.

"D'ye hear that, Het? Meynell's opinion. The opinion of one of the leading men in the city. Stands to reason he must know the world. Just what I was saying when you came in, Mr. Stannard, and I'm afraid we're both right. It gave me a turn at first—thinking of murder—but it's *not*. I wish to Heaven it was!" he broke off angrily.

"You think he's gone?"

"I don't think; I *know*. I've seen it all before. It wasn't for nothing that my head went running on poor Harry Sanderson all day after we met this boy, Poynter, just outside here, and I told him what I'd heard at the Horse Guards. Weren't you there, Het?"

"What did he do?" spoke a strained little voice from the window.

"Do? Why, look bothered and sick at heart, and down on his luck. Everything a soldier ought not to look. Just poor Sanderson's face when we landed at Varna and heard we were to go to the front directly. My greatest friend. As fine a fellow as ever stepped. Nothing wrong with him but nerves, or imagination, or something. Nothing that the first sight of the enemy or the first volley about his ears wouldn't have mended for good and all. Now listen,

Hetty; two days after we landed he disappeared; fell into the harbour; robbed and murdered—take your choice which. There's a fine tablet to his memory in a church I know of, and his name is down on the memorial cross we put up to those who fell in the Crimea. His sweetheart mourned him faithfully to the end of her life."

The newspaper wavered, but Hetty made no sign.

"Nevertheless, four years after, I was called by the police to identify a man found drowned with my name in his tattered pocket-book. A miserable, half-starved, opium-sodden scarecrow, but Harry Sanderson, and no other. I gave a name at random, and the parish buried him. What mad panic had driven the poor wretch to fly, how he must have skulked in hiding, and drifted lower and lower, who can tell? And to think that just such another ——"

"But you *shall not* think it! Nobody has any right to think it!" cried Hester, standing forth, her eyes blazing, her lips a-quiver. "No one is ever likely to know two such miserable stories in a life. What has he done that we should begin to cast shame on him when he is not here to defend himself—when he must be lying dead—he *must!*"

"Why! Why! Het? What does the girl mean? What do *you* know more than anybody else? Eh? Speak up if you do."

"I don't. Why should I, any more than the Meynells?" Her voice dropped as if she were sullen or ashamed of her outburst, and she began nervously to smooth and fold the paper, her face turned from them.

"Now what about your mother, Het? You mustn't break out before her like that, you know. Bless my soul, no. And is she to be told? and am *I* to do it, or you, or Mr. Stannard?"

"There's no reason why you should not tell her; I am sure Mr. Stannard's presence will be a comfort. There are so many last questions, which were forgotten when he was here before, about Monday's arrangements. I don't suppose you need be afraid that any other subject will agitate her much at present."

Sir John frowned in perplexity at Hetty's unusual tone; but toddled off, rather enjoying, in the secret depths of his soul, his importance as the bearer of such awful tidings, now that his first alarm and grief had worn off.

Eustace lingered irresolutely. Something in Hester's tone and the sudden droop of her figure as her father left the room and she believed herself alone arrested him. She was not ill or fainting as he fancied however. She only dropped her arms on the back of Sir John's great chair, and her face on them, reminding him as she did so of the day when he found her alone in St. Fridolin's, and, by association, of her half-spoken confidences. Perhaps the recollection helped him to understand the meaning of her face when she raised it and met his unexpectedly.

"Do *you* believe that?" she asked, under her breath.

He was taken aback: never having formed an opinion of his own. Sir John's theory seeming as plausible as Lord Charles's, he had not considered it necessary to hold any special views of his own, so far.

"I don't *want* to agree with your father," he said, heartily, "and I won't if you'll give me a single good ground to go upon."

"I don't know whether I can. I don't know how much I ought to tell—if telling would help. I haven't had time to think yet," she said, wearily. "I made him a promise and I ought to keep it—or so it appears to me just now," and she pressed her hands to her eyes again.

Edric had been so careful to omit all mention of any menace from Euphrosyne, that to Hester's mind he merely conveyed the impression of a common-place intriguer, possessed by some means of Lady Valeria's confidence, and anxious to keep the manipulation of the affair to herself. The last interview, as transmitted to Hester's imagination through Edric's halting description, was an unusual and eccentric experience—nothing more; the freak of a crazy-pated old lady who had taken a romantic fancy to Edric's bright face and broad shoulders. The loss of the letter was serious of course. It most likely contained or referred to some gift to Edric which she wished her son to confirm. Something worth stealing, and which had been stolen, awkwardly enough for Edric, but there was an end of it. Edric had begged her to keep silence on the subject. He had gone as near to exacting a promise from her as he could with any propriety. Could she disobey him now to any purpose?

"What sort of a man is Mr. Meynell?" was the unexpected outcome of her reflections. "A good man?"

"I think he is—in his way. I think he is honourable, benevolent, anxious to do right."

"Will you find out whether he and Mr. Poynter ever met after Lady Valeria's death."

"I happen to know they did not."

"Then tell him that Mr. Poynter was in great trouble about something he had to deliver to him, which was stolen from him the same night that Lady Valeria gave it to him. I have no right to say more, unless he sees in this any clue worth following up. You must please not speak of this to anyone else. Now let us go to mamma. She wants reassuring on several points—that she is clear of all responsibility about tickets, and that Mr. de Cressy, as well as you, will be at hand to support her from the first."

She led the way with a nervous little laugh, and Eustace, startled at this unlooked for confirmation of all the suppositions he had heard discussed, followed; little guessing that two ends of the tangled meshes that involved them all had that moment been laid in his clasp.

(To be continued.)

SYRUPS OF FRUITS AND FLOWERS.

SUMMER DRINKS.

MOST countries have their national and favourite beverage. Olympus had its nectar, and the Northern Vikings looked forward to quaffing celestial mead and ale in the Halls of Odin. The sherbet of Turkey and the famous "Sekenjebîn" of Persia, in which vinegar, sugar and water are so mixed that the "sour and sweet should be as equally balanced as the blessings and miseries of life;" Cider, in the making of which Normandy, Devon and New Jersey are friendly rivals; while "Limonata," cooled with the snows of the Apennines and Pyrenees, is called through the hot streets of Italian and Spanish cities the live-long day. France has her syrups and eau sucrée, and, alas, absinthe as well; Germany her "Maitrank," which, with its odoriferous herbs and delicious flavour, approaches as nearly to nectar as anything we can imagine. The favourite drinks of America are legion, and their very names startle one into animation; whilst England, apart from her "home brew," seems to have borrowed something from all countries.

But the most popular English ideal of Summer drinks is that they should be effervescent; and, glancing down this long list, I see few that have not "something stronger" added to them. Even the harmless ginger beer is turned into "shandygaff" by the addition of beer, and seltzer and soda waters require the assistance of an army of spirituous decoctions to make them palatable. The Frenchman, with his tumbler of sugared water, has long been a standing joke amongst us; and it is not until we win experience that we find eau sucrée, flavoured with lemon syrup, is really more refreshing than any amount of the wildly delightful effervescent waters, by whatever name they may be called. After bolting them in haste, as is usually the habit, during effervescence, we soon find thirst returning on us worse than ever, and taking possession of us "like an armed man."

If financial difficulties continue as at present, many of us must simplify our conditions, and so modify the daily habits of our lives that we may accept new ways of greater economy and simplicity. Women, especially young women, seem to have already unconsciously

accepted this and put it in practice with regard to wine and beer, for day by day I hear them, in increasing numbers, declining both. Indeed, we have only to look at the changed conditions of things in the great city of London, to see that men and youths largely take tea, coffee, or milk, in preference to beer or wine, at the mid-day luncheon.

Still here, even in this change for the better, we are likely to fall from the Scylla of spirituous beverages into the Charybdis of too much tea ; a change the doctors would think (so far as our digestions and nerves are concerned) for the worse. In these times of "afternoon tea" most people take it three times a day, and are no doubt suffering for it in many ways unwittingly. The only other afternoon beverage seems to be claret-cup, and from these two some more painstaking hostess will sometimes stray to iced coffee. I am not now speaking of parties, but of the occasions of ordinary life ; yet in both cases it seems to me, that some fresh departure is needed, something simple, easily attained, and cheap, and not beyond the powers of the housemistress, in town or country, to produce herself. For all these reasons a return to the delicately flavoured and palatable syrups of olden days, made of fruits and flowers, or spices, both fragrant and suitable to Summer and the sunny season, seems sensible and advisable.

The first and oldest of these syrups is "Capillaire," formerly meaning a syrup made from the leaves of the Maidenhair fern, but now used to denote a simple syrup flavoured with orange-flower water. The North American *Adiantum pedatum* has the same properties as the Maidenhair, and is often used as a substitute. The aroma is agreeable and aromatic, and the liquid is somewhat mucilaginous.

The basis of "Capillaire," and most of the syrups, is an ordinary clarified one, made of sugar without admixture. The method of making is as follows: Put into a saucepan two pounds of sugar to every pint of water, stir the liquid until the sugar be melted, remove from the fire, and add to it the white of an egg, beaten-up previously with a little water to a froth. Stir this into the sugar, and replace on the fire, and the moment it boils take up the saucepan and let it stand half an hour to clear. Then remove the scum which will settle at the top, and strain the syrup through a hair sieve, replace on the fire and let it boil for a quarter of an hour, skimming continually, when it should be finally taken from the fire and run through a jelly-bag. Bottle the mixture in pint bottles, and cork closely when cold. The ordinary "Capillaire" would be this syrup with half a pint of orange-flower water added to it.

The Maidenhair infusion consists of three ounces of freshly gathered leaves put into a pint of boiling water over the fire. Cover the saucepan, and stand it to infuse for three hours in a slow oven, where it cannot boil. Then run the mixture through a jelly-bag, prepare a gallon of syrup made as directed above, and when you have boiled and skimmed it the second time, add to it a pinch of

saffron, to give it an amber hue, and continue to boil till it adheres to the spoon, and the syrup be reduced one quarter. Then pour in the infusion of Maidenhair, and a quarter of a pint of orange-flower water or a little lemon-juice, mix and stir the whole together, boil for ten minutes more, then run through a jelly-bag into a jug with a good spout (to bottle easily), bottle in pint bottles and cork, sealing down closely.

"Syrup of Guimauve," or "Marshmallow," is a very popular French syrup. A good handful of it should be put, when freshly gathered, into a quart of water. Boil it slowly in a covered vessel, till reduced to half, add this to the clarified and prepared syrup, as directed in the "Capillaire" recipe, add the orange-flower water and a little orange peel, and run through a jelly-bag.

"Syrup of Violets" is made with freshly and carefully gathered flowers, in the proportion of six pints of boiling water to a pound of flowers. Keep this closely covered, and let it remain in a warm oven to macerate for forty-eight hours. Then strain off the liquor, and press the flowers, and to each pint add a pound and a half of sugar. Put it over a very slow fire to dissolve, and let it remain, skimming it at intervals, and not allowing it to boil, and run through a jelly-bag before it be cold.

"Syrup of Clove Gillyflowers" is made in the same manner, but the flowers only require twenty-four hours' maceration.

"Syrup of Roses" is made by putting the rose leaves, freshly gathered, into a jar, packed tightly as possible; cover with boiling water, and let them macerate twenty-four hours; strain, and proceed as with the "Violet Syrup." Cowslips and Primroses can be used in the same manner.

"Groseille Syrup" is made with the juice of Red Currants, which must be gathered when quite ripe. The juice is obtained by placing the fruit in a jar, which must be stood upright in a pan of boiling water, over the fire, when all expressed, strain through a sieve, then squeeze the juice through a cotton bag, and to every pint put two pounds and a quarter of sugar. When melted, take the pan from the fire, and beat up the white of an egg, and clarify as directed in the recipe for "Capillaire." Skim carefully, strain through a jelly bag, and bottle closely when cold. All Fruit Syrups may be made in this manner.

"Spice Syrups" may be manufactured at any time of the year, and are easy to make. "Clove Syrup" is made by pouring boiling water over powdered cloves, one pint to two ounces. Place it over the fire, and let it boil an hour, then strain through a sieve, and to every pint of liquor add a pound and a half of sugar. Clarify with white of egg, then boil till thick enough, and run through a jelly-bag. "Cinnamon" and "Nutmeg" Syrups are made in the same manner. From their warming qualities, they are preferred in the Summer by many people, who would be afraid of Fruit Syrups. "Ginger

Syrup" is made with an ounce and a half of root-ginger to a quart of boiling water. Pound the ginger in a mortar, and leave it to macerate, closely covered, for two days. Then strain, and add a pound and a half of sugar to each pint, and proceed to clarify as above directed.

What is called "Syrup of Orgeat" in France is really "Syrup of Almonds;" the name "Orgeat" being derived from a former custom to make barley-water and flavour it with almonds. There is no more delicious thing than good "Orgeat," and there are two ways of making it. One (which appears to be English) with milk and one without. The first is perhaps the most simple in manufacture: viz. Take three quarters of a pound of sweet almonds, and twenty-five bitter ones, blanch them and pound together in a mortar, adding a tablespoonful of cold water at intervals to prevent the almonds oiling. Mix two pints of water and three of milk in a jug, and add it gradually to the pounded almonds, stirring very well. Then strain through some muslin. Take half a pound of powdered sugar and a pint of water, and boil for half an hour, skimming it well, mix it with the almonds, and lastly add half a cupful of orange-flower water.

The method of making French "Orgeat" is more complex. Blanch a pound of sweet and two ounces of bitter almonds, and pound them as directed above, in a mortar, and mix the paste gradually with three pints of water, and strain through a cotton bag, mixing with it a quarter of a pint of orange-flower water. Make a gallon of clarified syrup, as directed at the beginning, and put it on the fire. Let it boil up, then add the almond emulsion very gradually, and boil carefully till it attains a proper thickness. Let it cool, then, and bottle while still warm, shaking before you pour it into the bottles, and letting it stand till perfectly cool before you cork it. The bottles should be quite full, and in France a drop of olive oil is poured on the top of each bottle to ensure the emulsions keeping. This can be removed with a little cotton.

A friend in America has recently contributed the following to our stock of Summer drinks, and says it is much used amongst the "abstaining" portion of the population. In fact it is called "the Temperance beverage." Take six lemons, a pint of ripe strawberries, a small pineapple, a pound of castor sugar, and two quarts of water. Begin by peeling the lemons very thinly, and then cut them in two, and squeeze out the juice, taking out the seeds over the peel. This should stand for at least twenty-four hours. Then add to it half-a-pound of the sugar, put the other half-pound over the strawberries, and mash them with a spoon. The pineapple should be peeled and cut into slices. Take a large bowl, and put in first the lemon-juice, peel, and sugar, then the strawberries and the slices of pineapple, and lastly add the water, which, if not very cold, should be iced. Stir with a silver spoon till the sugar has melted, and let it stand for two hours before serving.

And now, remembering the invariable thirstiness of children, who, I believe, really suffer much when they have thoughtless elders, I will give a cheap and very easily prepared recipe for "Imperial," an old-fashioned, but excellent drink, and suitable for everyone, of course, as well as children.

Put a quarter of an ounce of cream-of-tartar and the juice and thinly-cut peel of one lemon into a large jug, pour on them a quart of *boiling* water, and sweeten to your taste with white sugar. Cover it up, and when cold it will be fit for use. The lemon peel and cream-of-tartar will fall to the bottom as sediment, and need not be disturbed in pouring out.

This last recipe will be found a veritable acquisition where tennis playing and constant violent exercises are going on amongst the young people of the family.

But I must not conclude before giving one or two for the different "Cups" so much in use in these days, and which many people would prefer to anything else. It will be best, perhaps, to divide them into the inexpensive, and the recherché, and to give one of each. As a general rule, all Cups should be put in a jug and covered up, which jug should be surrounded with rough ice for at least an hour before using. Then the contents should be strained, or carefully poured off, free from the herbs, &c., that have been used in making it. Francatelli recommends that bruised sugar-candy should be used for all such drinks instead of sugar. In ordinary cases a cheap claret is quite good enough for "Claret-cup" at home; and the Swiss champagne makes a good ordinary "Champagne-cup."

It is hardly needful to say, perhaps, that the champagne of violent effervescence is not the best wine. "Sillery," which only froths and bubbles, is the best of the champagnes; and in France "bien frappé" simply means that the champagne has been iced out of all effervescence. This is not the English taste; we do not like "still effects" in sparkling wines; and, strange to say, we seem to have had the same taste a good many years ago, for Henry VIII. as well as Charles V. of Spain, and Pope Leo X. had each a vineyard at Ay, or Aii, where the best of the effervescing wine is made; and each vineyard had a small house and a superintendent to manage the vintage. So each sovereign in those days looked after the genuine article and quite appreciated it. There is something very funny, when one thinks of the characters of these three men, in the fact that they all had a taste for champagne. I hope it is not wrong to talk scandal of King Wenceslaus of Bohemia and of the Romans, at this late date, but it is said of him that in 1397, when he came to France to negociate a treaty with Charles VI., he got as far as Rheims, and having made acquaintance with champagne for the first time, he was overcome by the wine every day before dinner for a year and a half, and managed to spin out his diplomatic business for that time, by first yielding nothing, and then yielding everything

required of him. I have always hoped that this was not the Wenceslaus of the Christmas carol, in what the French would call his "jeunesse orageuse."

A simple method of making a "cup" of any of the sparkling wines, champagne, moselle, or hock, is to take for the component parts one bottle of wine, one of soda water, a *liqueur* glass of curaçoa, and one basket of fresh strawberries, and sugar to taste. Any other fruit may be used according to the season, such as raspberries, pineapple, pears or peaches (I should use brandy instead, or as well as curaçoa).

A more recherché cup would be one bottle of champagne, three glasses of sherry, one of brandy, one of curaçoa, half a lemon, two slices of cucumber, the same of pineapple, a bottle of seltzer water, a sprig of borage, and sugar to taste. With moselle, sauterne, or chablis, an orange should be used instead of a lemon, and with Sauterne many people prefer a bottle of Vichy water (Celestin's) to seltzer or soda.

The best "Claret-cup" would have one bottle of champagne to two bottles of the best claret, three glasses of sherry, one of brandy, and the same of noyau, two slices of cucumber, and some borage. In using the latter, it is well to remember that, although you cannot do without it, you may have too much of it.

"Cider" and "Perry-cups" are prepared in the same manner: viz., one quart of cider or perry, one pint of seltzer or soda, two glasses of brandy, one of curaçoa, half a lemon, a little grated nutmeg, and a sprig of borage. This may be simplified by leaving out the curaçoa, and reducing the brandy.

"Pineapple-cup" must be made with the best champagne in the above proportions, but, instead of curaçoa, maraschino must be used. Slice the pineapple very thin—first ice the wine—then put the pineapple, maraschino, and sugar into a glass jug, and pour the iced wine and soda water on them, and serve at once. Do not let the pineapple stand in the champagne when icing it.

In giving the various recipes for syrups, I have invariably used the French formula, but, of course, any other flavouring such as lemon, vanilla, or almond, may be used instead of orange-flower water. For fear my readers should forget that "macerate" has two meanings, perhaps I had better say that in this case "macerate" means to "steep the flowers or spices in water kept on a stove or in a cool oven, so that it may be constantly warm." No other word quite explains the process.

And now for two parting pieces of advice. Always stir everything in the way of syrups or beverages with a silver spoon: and let nothing disturb your equanimity. Be patient as the legendary "Griselda," so shall you be fortunate in concocting your "Summer Drinks."

DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.

STORIES FROM A MUSIC-SCHOOL.

MARY SILVER.

THE music-school from which these stories come is situated in Tennion Street, Guelph Square, at the West End of London. Guelph Square, altogether a very quiet place, is tolerably well-known to the frequenters of the West End; but not many strangers find their way into Tennion Street, where is the shabby and dingy old house dignified by the name of "The Royal English School of Music." Its vicinity, however, may be guessed at by the number of students, male and female, who pass to and fro with their music-cases about the neighbourhood.

If a stranger were accidentally to wander into this little-known region, and rendering himself invisible to the porter who sits in the hall, were to pass unchallenged up the stair-case, he would feel inclined to say with Caliban—

> "A thousand twangling instruments
> Do hum about mine ears."

There is a perfect Babel of sounds going on from all the class-rooms around. Violinists practising florid passages; brilliant bursts of pianoforte music; voices, high and low, male and female, performing shakes, and scales, and runs; are all blended in a musical chaos more realistic than that of Haydn or Gounod, until, perhaps, the great voice of the organ in the concert-room comes rumbling through the house, to swallow up all the other sounds.

On a certain windy morning in March, a group of candidates were waiting to go through their entrance-examination within those classic walls, which are adorned with black boards inscribed with the names of students who have won scholarships, and with the busts of certain departed principals—one or two of them being decorated with burnt-cork moustaches by some irreverent student. Amidst this group sat a rather tall, fair young man, with very regular features, and a small fair moustache shading his upper lip. He carried in his hand a volume of Bach's organ fugues.

It was early in the morning, and the examiners had not yet arrived. The candidates generally looked about as cheerful as candidates at examinations are wont to look; and the tall, fair young man fidgeted, and muttered impatient exclamations, in a manner which seemed to indicate that he was not used to waiting and did not admire the experience.

Presently, a girl came by, music in hand, and went into the concert-room, giving a quick, smiling glance, as she passed the impatient

candidate, first at his face, and then at his music. The young man looked after her with awakened interest.

"A nice girl," he remarked to himself. "She looked at Bach as if she knew him too. I wonder if she is going to play?"

In a very few moments the organ-tones came pealing upon the air —the grave chorale, succeeded by delicate variations, which opens Mendelssohn's sixth sonata. The fair young man, after listening for a little, jumped up and walked into the concert-room.

Yes, there was the girl at the organ; it was she who was playing. As the concert-room was otherwise empty, the candidate for examination thought he might improve his time by making the acquaintance of this Saint Cecilia, so he boldly made his way to the organ just as the young lady came to the end of a variation.

"I beg your pardon! I hope I have not startled you; but will you tell me if this is the organ I shall have to play upon when I am examined?"

The young lady turned round with a mischievous smile. She was *not* startled, having watched his approach in the mirror which hung over the music-rest.

"I imagine it is," she replied, "as this is the only organ in the house. Would you like to have a look at it?"

"Thank you. But am I disturbing you?"

"Not at all. I was only playing while I wait for Dr. Cecil; I am the first on his list, and am rather early this morning."

"Dr. Cecil? He is the Professor I want to have. What sort of an old fellow is he?"

"He is the dearest, most gentle, most amiable little man in existence, and an excellent master. All his pupils love him, though they laugh at his round bald head and call him "the Dutch Cheese."

"All his pupils love him!" echoed the young man, reflectively. "That's very jolly for the Doctor. Does he teach many ladies?"

"No, I'm the only girl in his class at present. There will be some more of his pupils coming in a minute, so you had better try the organ at once if you wish to do so. What are you going to play?" she continued, rising from the organ-stool.

"Bach's G. minor; the big one, you know. What wretched pedals these are!"

However, the candidate for examination contrived to give a very brilliant rendering of the fugue in spite of the "wretched pedals;" and his new acquaintance congratulated him warmly upon it.

"Well, you *can* play!" she said. "That was splendid! They are safe to pass *you*."

"Oh, I dare say they won't throw me out," replied the young man, carelessly. "But I wish they would be quick about this business; I object to be kept waiting."

He had taken a good look at his companion during their conversation, and had decided that she was not pretty, but that there was

something attractive about her. She had a bright, expressive face, framed in a mass of crisp, bronze-brown, wavy hair, irregular features, a pair of changeful hazel-grey eyes, and a sensitive mouth. And she had that "excellent thing in woman," a pleasant voice. She wore a blue serge frock, and had a bunch of violets tucked in her bodice.

"I believe that is the principal now arriving. You had better go, Mr. Templeton."

"Why, how did you know my name?" said he, surprised.

"I saw it on your music."

"Now, that is a capital idea! May I see your music, please?"

"I will tell you without that. My name is Mary Silver."

"And so you are a pupil of Dr. Cecil's. I thought at first sight that you were a singer, until I saw how you looked at my Bach."

"What a very vocal-looking face I must have," laughed Miss Silver. "I am often taken for a singer. Now I knew, when I saw the way you moved your hands, that you were an instrumentalist. Oh, yes, I have had experience. I am deputy organist at our parish church; I used to play at the daily services when I was rather youthful, so the choir styled me 'the infant phenomenon,' without regard to my vexation."

"I am organist at St. Cuthbert's, —— Square," remarked the young man. "But my organ is not a good one."

"No? *We* have the finest organ in Surrey. Mr. Norfolk would talk to you for an hour together about it. But I really think you ought to go now. And don't offend the Dragon."

"Who is the Dragon?"

"Don't you know? He is director of the sight-singing classes, and secretary to the principal, and is with him at all the examinations. He arranges all the class-lists, fixes your hours for you, reports you to the principal if you don't behave, and altogether transacts the major part of the school business. He is chief after the principal. They call him the Dragon because he is so sharp and wide-awake, and very strict; but he is the kindest and best of friends, if you know how to get on with him."

"He seems a favourite of yours."

"He is; a very great favourite; he is always so good to me. They say here that he never forgets a kindness or forgives an injury. I don't believe the last, but I know the first to be true."

"Well, I'll behave as well as I can. Au revoir, Miss Silver."

"What a splendid player that young man is!" she thought to herself, as the door closed behind him. "And how very blue his eyes are."

But Dr. Cecil arriving at this moment, and two or three of his pupils with him, Mary soon had to occupy her attention otherwise than with the blueness of Mr. Frank Templeton's eyes.

She did not see him again that day, although she stayed a little longer than usual after her lesson, and lingered somewhat on the

stairs and in the doorway as she went out. But on the following Tuesday, as she went into her singing-master's little room, a student named Nelly Warner, a terrible chatterbox of a girl, ran up to her.

"Mary, there's such a good-looking fellow just come in! He's one of the new students. Such a complexion, and such perfect features! I am over head and ears in love with him already."

"You goose!" exclaimed Clara Latimer, another of the class, for there were always several pupils present at the lessons: "he is an organist, Mary, and is to be a pupil of Dr. Cecil's, so you will see a good deal of him."

"Oh," said Mary, "that must be my friend with the blue eyes. I made his acquaintance on Saturday."

"There now!" cried Nelly, dolefully, "you are a mean thing, Mary. I did think I was going to have him all to myself!"

There was a general burst at this. Nelly Warner was famous for making them laugh.

"What's that?" enquired their professor, turning round from the lesson he was giving. "What are you all at? Let me have the recit again, Miss Smith, and sing that F. sharp this time."

"It's only that Miss Silver has a new sweetheart, Mr. St. Paul," said mischievous Nelly Warner.

"Oh, is that it? But who was the old one?" added Mr. St. Paul, a pleasant, easy-going, genial kind of man, who took a fatherly interest in his pupils.

"It is not true, Mr. St. Paul," cried Mary, crimsoning. "I haven't one at all."

"Well, never mind! I dare say you will get one, all in good time," replied her master, consolingly.

"I never mean to fall in love," returned Mary. "I like my liberty too well."

"We shall see," responded the professor, sagely. "Miss Latimer, you are the next; get your solfeggio ready. And if you want a lesson in expression, young ladies, go and hear Madame Albani sing 'Hear my prayer,' to-morrow night."

"Mary," said Clara Latimer, as the two girls sat in the concert-room a little later, "your handsome young man passed his exam. all right, then?" These two girls were close friends, and Clara had been told about the Saturday adventure.

"I knew he would pass, he played so well," replied Mary. "You should have heard him rattle off that fugue! I do hope he will come this afternoon. I want you to see how good-looking he is."

"Have you taken the school fever?" laughed Clara. "Is it a case of 'love at first sight?'"

"No," answered Mary, seriously. "But he *has* a wonderfully nice face."

"What was that about 'first sight?'" interrupted a masculine voice from behind. "Is Mary Silver stricken with the fever?"

This was Lancelot Bell, a devoted friend and admirer of the girls. Society in the school, like society out of it, was split up into numerous little cliques. Every group of girls had their special cavaliers to sit with them in the concert-room, sometimes escort them to their own doors, if they lived near, or else to the railway station, and take care of them on concert nights. Lance Bell was one of Mary's "set;" he was a pianist of the "thunder and lightning" order; a little, fair, lively, romantic fellow, thoroughly good and kind, and who went by the nickname of "Dresden China."

"I heard you raving about somebody's face," said Lance, as he sat down behind them. "Whose was it?"

"A new student's, with whom Mary Silver is smitten," replied Clara. "Was it the face or the organ-playing that conquered you, Mary?"

"You need not laugh," responded Mary, with dignity. "Only think," she added, her tone becoming serious, "if it be true that all the words we speak remain in the air, what a fearful collection of nonsense would be found floating over this concert-room!"

"Yes, and Mr. Lancelot Bell would be found responsible for quite half of them," spoke up Emilie Latimer, Clara's sister. "Who is this?"

"Oh, it is he," exclaimed Mary. "Look, Clara, here he comes. Tell me if you don't think him handsome."

Clara Latimer looked critically at the new student, who had just entered the concert-room.

"Yes," she whispered back, "he *is* handsome; but, do you know, I think his face very cold. Mary, he seems to be coming straight up to *you!*"

And in fact Mr. Templeton did come "straight up" to Mary, and took his seat behind her with as much *sang-froid* as if it had been his customary place for years. She greeted him with a heightened colour and a frank smile. He then turned to the other young man and spoke.

"How are you, Bell?"

"Why, Templeton! What wind has blown you here?" cried Lancelot, in great surprise, as they shook hands. "You never told me you had any idea of coming."

"I made my mind up rather suddenly," was the indifferent answer. "What's on now?"

"That girl walking up the room is going to play," explained one of the young ladies.

"I'll wager she is going to play Weber," said Lance Bell. "We have the Concert-stück about every other week at these rehearsals."

"Wrong for once, Lance!" said Mary, as the first notes sounded. "It's Sterndale-Bennett. What a welcome change!"

"Just hark how she is banging out the first notes of all those groups!" cried Clara Latimer. "But what can you expect when a girl with a touch like a sledge-hammer attempts to play Bennett!"

The school students were hard and captious critics in matters musical, but otherwise they were a merry and friendly set. There was that kind of free-masonry attaching to them which seems always to exist between the followers of any art; and in spite of the wide differences among them in social position, religious opinion, and politics, they never quarrelled.

"There seems to be a considerable amount of conversation going on," remarked Frank Templeton. "Doesn't the conductor object to that?"

"He does sometimes," observed Mary. "We are as considerate as possible, and choose the back row to sit in when we want to talk."

"Then you don't listen?"

"Oh, don't we!" retorted Miss Clara Latimer. "I could tell you exactly how many notes that girl dropped in her last run. It was only *five*."

"And as to doing fancy-work," said Emilie Latimer, "the girls do it everywhere. That girl in front takes her lace-work into choir."

"And nine times out of ten she misses her leads in consequence," said Clara.

"What is the choir here like?" enquired Mr. Templeton.

"It is very good," said Mary; "the female voices are rather a specialty. They want more men. Shall you join?"

"Perhaps. I don't know."

"Don't you know, Templeton?" put in Lance Bell, mischievously, "Mary Silver sits in the top row of the sopranos. It is convenient for flirting with the front row of the tenors."

"Lancelot, be quiet!" cried Mary, colouring.

"It is a curious fact," remarked Charlie Powell, another of the students, "that the pretty girls on both sides always seem to gravitate towards that top row."

"You don't mean to say that the students *flirt?*" cried Mr. Templeton, with an expression of great wonder.

"Why, certainly," asserted Clara Latimer, all innocence. "It is part of the school course."

"How very jolly!" murmured the new student. "But they must have forgotten to put it down on my class-list."

Mary Silver began to see a good deal of Mr. Templeton. It happened that the time fixed for his organ-lesson was next to that of her own. Also, he *did* come into the choir, and sat just behind her, next to the organ; and he always came to rehearsals. Thus their friendship grew and ripened rapidly. Indeed, the atmosphere of the English School of Music was as a hothouse to plants of this growth.

Mary Silver lived with her grandmother, her only surviving relative, in a certain suburban town in Surrey. Their dwelling was a pretty, old-fashioned vine-covered cottage, on the sunny side of Church Street, the oldest part of the town. Mary's own little room looked on to the street, full of quaint houses and shops, the grey old

church-tower, with its sweet-voiced bells, "the pride of Surrey," rising up behind. It was just such a little chamber as Goethe's Gretchen may have slept and dreamed in before Faust came with lingering looks and tender tones to steal her heart away. The sunlight shone through the diamond-pane window in the earliest morning, and the late moon peeped in at night, and cast mysterious rays on the crucifix which hung over the little bed. Beethoven's noble head, Mendelssohn's genial smile, Bach's grave but not unkindly features adorned the walls. Mary used to say "good-night" and "good-morning" to them as though they had been alive.

Mary had taken to the organ at a very early age. The fine old parish church of St. John the Baptist contained a noble instrument; there was daily service, and the music was well looked after. Mary had been the organist's favourite pupil before she was transferred for study to the English School and Dr. Cecil. She still went to the church to practise, and to take share in the daily organ services.

She and Frank Templeton soon became fast friends. He helped her with her harmony and counterpoint, "turned over" for her when she played at a chamber concert, and was her frequent companion in all the school doings: sometimes escorting her and the Latimer girls to concerts, operas, and recitals.

Mary had introduced him to Mrs. Silver, telling her he was very kind to her in the school, and the old lady received him cordially. During the Easter holidays he was a frequent guest at Vine Cottage. He and Mary had long afternoons together in the quaint, low-pitched drawing-room, playing duets, and singing; or they would be together at the organ in the vast old church, nearly large enough for a cathedral, with its lofty pillars and painted windows and ancient monuments, and its stately altar. And then there would be merry meals afterwards in the little parlour—they kept to the old-fashioned word—when the kindly hostess would bring out wonderful treasures of home-made cakes and preserves to her appreciative guest. Mrs. Silver was a very pretty old lady, with an abundance of snow-white hair, and she was genial and lively as a girl. She had taken a great fancy to Frank, and made him very welcome.

Some woods lay just outside the town, and Frank and Mary had frequent rambles in them, returning laden with spoils of the sweet Spring flowers to fill the little house. And they had pleasant hours in the long, narrow garden, Mary's favourite dreaming-place, amongst the blossoming fruit trees. Oh, happy Spring days, that passed all too quickly!

But these two young people did not consider themselves in love with one another; they were "only friends." And if the sharp-witted students at the school noticed that Mary had a way of constantly watching the concert-room door until Frank appeared, and that Frank had a special smile which he kept for Mary alone, such things were too general there to call for more than a passing remark that

"Templeton and Miss Silver seemed rather sweet upon one another."

Her grandmother did indeed say to her once: "What makes your eyes so bright lately, child? and you go about smiling, smiling to yourself, all the day long!"

"It's the summer coming, grandmamma," answered Mary. Yes, the summer was coming to her.

The next term brought with it the formidable prospect of the July examinations; time of woe and tribulation to both students and professors. For in spite of their flirtations the students, with very few exceptions, worked extremely hard, and the yearly examinations were severe and searching. But,

> "Be the day weary or be the day long,
> At length it ringeth to evensong."

And so, in course of time, even this terrible period was got through.

Then came prize day, always an exciting time. It was not known who had obtained the bronze and silver medals, which were so eagerly competed for, until the moment of bestowal, when the names were called out in stentorian tones by Mr. Ellis.

The students and their friends assembled for the ceremony in the concert-room; the girls wearing the school uniform of white, with a royal-red sash worn over the right shoulder, and the former medallists displaying all their decorations. The medals were almost always given by some notable celebrity of the musical world; and the successful students who were named, and had to "go down to the front," to receive them, were much or little cheered by their fellows, according to their popularity in the school, or the reverse. Then would follow speeches from the principal, and from other grandees in and out of the institution; and the proceedings would terminate with enthusiastic cheering, and demonstrative farewells all round; the students then separating, generally in a very effervescent state, to spend the long vacation.

Some of the girls with their friends celebrated the close of the term by an excursion to Hampton Court the next day. Mary Silver was one of them. A right merry day they spent, wandering about proud Wolsey's ancient palace; that haunted region, thick with the ghosts of so many whose names are famous in history. They explored the palace and the grounds; they took boat and rowed up the river, singing as they went; they had their likenesses taken by an itinerant photographer on the green, in what that artist designated "a grope;" and they went to "Jaggs's Dining Rooms," where they consumed tea and bread-and-butter, and unlimited quantities of cake and strawberries. Such days as these live in the memory.

The long vacation lasted nearly two months; and during this time Frank Templeton went to Cornwall for a prolonged visit. Mary Silver was staying at Hastings with Mrs. Latimer and her daughters. It thus happened that the two "friends" did not meet again until

the day before the commencement of the Michaelmas term. Mary was seated at the organ, practising in St. John's Church, in the golden autumn afternoon, when Frank walked in.

"Oh, Frank!—is that you?" she cried, coming to a sudden stop in "The Horse and his Rider."

"It's myself, if I am not mistaken," answered he. "How are you, Mary?"

"I was wondering," said Mary, when their first greetings were over, "why I had not heard anything of you all this time. I understood you were to come back long before the term began—and I wanted to have a blackberrying day."

"Oh, I put off coming back—at least, I stayed longer than I intended, and then—and there were a lot of things to look after," replied Frank, rather vaguely, and with a sudden access of colour to his usually pale cheeks. Now Frank was not at all given to blushing; in fact, he could generally hold perfect control of his countenance, and Mary wondered. She saw there was something constrained in his manner.

"Is anything the matter?" she asked, looking up at him anxiously.

"My dear child, I am all right!" he returned, rather impatiently. "What should be the matter?"

And then he began to talk to her in the old manner, and to give comical descriptions of his adventures in Cornwall, so that her misgivings passed away.

They went home together, and had tea in the garden with Mrs. Silver; the dear old lady bringing out her choicest stores and fruit to regale the returned truant. Mary was looking very pretty in her pink cotton frock, with that bunch of fragrant carnations at her bosom, and the dreamy light in her eyes. Frank thought so; and he wondered why he had never thought her so very pretty until now. They had a merry meal under the large tree on the grass-plat, and chatted and laughed away until the sound of the church bell came stealing out upon the air.

"There is the bell for evensong!" cried Mary, hastily rising. "I must go. Where's my music?"

He did not offer to carry her music, or to go with her. He remained at home, talking to Mrs. Silver. Mary felt—well, as she had never felt before.

After playing through the service she came back and found him indoors at the piano. They fell to discussing the coming term, and how hard they both meant to work, and the amount of composition they would do. Most of the school students dabbled in composition, some made it their principal study.

Presently they strolled into the garden. It had grown dusk, and the great golden harvest-moon had risen, and was looking down tenderly upon them. In the west, the sunset glories of crimson and purple and palest opal light had not yet quite faded; but over their

heads the sky was darkest blue, where the evening star was shining. The ripe fruit hung now on the trees that had been thick with blossom at Eastertide; and the silvery asters were in bloom around; and the sunflowers, with their broad, smiling faces turning ever to the sun, the timid star of Bethlehem, which opens its petals only in the twilight, and the late tea-roses, heavy with fragrance. They paused in their walk to look at a pale snap-dragon on the wall, its outline sharply defined against the western sky. Frank had slipped his hand through Mary's arm; she had been talking to him on a subject on which she was wont to wax eloquent—her love for the church and the organ.

"It is part of my life," she said. "I love that organ as though it were a living thing. No other organ could be quite the same to me. I feel that it knows me, and would miss me if I were away from it; and I should not like to say anything against it, lest it should feel hurt."

"Silly little girl!" said Frank, very softly. "You are too tender-hearted, Mary; people who feel so much always suffer. It is not wise to let our feelings run away with us."

By way of practical illustration of this, Frank moved his arm, and let it creep round the girl's waist. The words themselves were not very caressing, but was it the subtle influence of the night that made his voice sound so dangerously tender? Mary said not a word: she stood beside him with downcast eyes. And then he bent his head nearer, till she could feel his breath upon her cheek, and their lips touched.

"My darling! My little wife!" Frank whispered.

And in the silence which ensued, for neither of them spoke, old Mrs. Silver appeared at the open window, calling to them that it was late to be out, for the dew was rising.

Mary lingered long at her prayers that night; she wanted to thank God, yet hardly knew whether it would be right, for this strange new happiness which filled her heart to overflowing; and she went to sleep with a smile upon her lips. But the moonlight crept into the room through the bars of the diamond window panes, and threw upon the bed a shadow as of a cross.

Again in the morning she had to go to St. John's, to take the organ. How happy she felt as she went along with her music, her heart within her singing songs of joyfulness. For surely, she thought, that kiss last night could mean nothing but that Frank loved her, and would want her to be his wife one day. Nay, had he not called her so—"my little wife!" Despite the innocent flirtations at the Music School, Mary Silver was simple-minded as the day; and it never occurred to her that anyone could have spoken to her as Frank spoke, and kissed her on the lips as he had kissed without a serious meaning. The chatter and nonsense of the students in their open flirtations was one thing; this implied quite another.

Yes, he must love her. She knew it by a thousand little tokens; tender shades of manner, caressing tones of voice, smiles such as he never gave elsewhere. "Trifles, light as air," all of them, but quickly read and interpreted by wits that are sharpened by love. Mary was right, the evidences of love are more often found in these intangible things than in spoken words. Frank did love her. Thus, throughout the service, and as she left the church and walked home after it, her whole heart seemed glowing with a sweet, radiant light. And as she went on later to the School for the first day of opening term, she said to herself: "I shall see him, I shall see him."

These joyful anticipations received a check; it is often the case in life. *She* reached the School; but there was no Frank; he did not make his appearance at rehearsal. So it was rather a blank day to Mary Silver. And the first day of the term had been wont to be so pleasant a one. New friends to make, old ones to greet again after a long absence, tales of vacation adventures to hear and relate on all sides.

But on the morrow she saw Mr. Templeton at their organ-lesson. He was silent and grave; nor did she wonder at it when he told her that the reason of his absence yesterday was the sudden death of a relative. They talked together in a subdued manner; but he did not allude in any way, even by tone or look, to that which had passed between them. His recent painful news debarred it for the moment, Mary supposed. She sympathised with him, and he seemed grateful for her sympathy; but she could not help thinking, with a sigh, of how different a meeting this was to-day from the one she had looked forward to yesterday.

The days went on. Still Frank did not, by a single word, revert to that moonlight night in the garden. They were together as much as usual at the School; and his manner to her seemed to outsiders the same as ever; but Mary herself, with the keen intuition born of love, knew that he was changed. He was irritable and impatient sometimes; but that she was too sweet-tempered to mind; she only tried, with gentle, loving wiles, to bring him back to a more gracious mood. In his manner there appeared a certain shade of constraint, at times approaching coldness, which had never been seen in him before, and that sorely grieved and perplexed her. Had she offended him? She could not think so; but why had he suddenly changed from the tender lover who had kissed her beneath the September moon and called her in the sweetest of whispers "his little wife?" Why had he done that, if this shadow was to spring up between them close upon it?

Now and then Frank would seem to repent, when he would return to the old tender looks and tones of more than friendship; yet almost before there was time to notice it his mood would change again.

It was on the Tuesday after the half-term examination that Mary, going into the room of her pianoforte master, Mr. Wilfred Shelley,

found the master absent, and the pianoforte occupied by a girl whom she had not seen before. A tall, handsome, stylish girl, with an exquisite complexion, brilliant cold eyes, and a supercilious mouth. She was playing bravura passages with a great deal of dash, and she suspended her occupation to honour Mary with a comprehensive stare.

"One of Mr. Shelley's pupils?" she coldly questioned. "He is called away to speak to somebody. You had better sit down."

"Thank you!" replied Mary, rather nettled at the supercilious tone, and at being thus patronised by a new student. "I don't require an invitation to sit. I am quite at home here. I am in my fifth year!"

The young lady laughed slightingly, and ran up a chromatic scale with her left hand.

"I have seen your Mr. Shelley," she began again, "and I do not know whether I shall get on with him. He was rather inclined to be on stilts just now. A young professor, too! Fancy that! I hear also that he is sarcastic."

"He is a first rate master!" cried Mary, warmly, for Mr. Shelley was her favourite professor, and she was nothing if not loyal. "If he is ever sarcastic to his pupils, it is their own fault."

"He can be exceedingly disagreeable when he chooses," said the new comer. "There is one thing I like about him: he has a nice voice. It is pleasant and refined. I suppose he is never disagreeable to *you?*"—with slight sarcasm.

"He is never anything but kind and pleasant to me," replied Mary. "He never gave me an unkind word or a cross look."

"Ah," said the new girl, after a long, scrutinising look at Mary, "I think I know you now. I recognise you from the description which has been given to me. 'A tell-tale face; you can almost read her thoughts on it.' That's how it ran."

Mary started, and flushed crimson. "Who said that?" she asked. But even as she spoke she divined what the answer would be.

"Your friend, Mr. Frank Templeton, gave it to me."

There ensued a moment's pause. On the new-comer's face sat a proud, meaning, mocking smile. Mary shivered involuntarily, and the other girl saw it.

"I suppose Mr. Templeton never told you he had met with me?" went on she. "He is a very great friend of yours, is he not?"

"Yes," answered Mary, resolutely, looking straight at her.

"So he is of mine. We saw a good deal of him in Cornwall; my family were staying there, and we all came back together. Mr. Templeton put off his own return to suit our convenience. And he comes to us frequently now in London."

Mary heard this piece of news with an apprehensive, sinking heart. Before she had framed any answering remark, Mr. Shelley came back to conclude his new pupil's lesson. Afterwards Mary took hers.

She played badly to-day: the presence of this brilliant, scornful stranger, who was listening to her with a contemptuous curl of the lip, disturbed her equanimity.

"Mr. Shelley," Mary said to her master, when she had left them alone, "please tell me who that girl is."

"She is Miss Grey," he replied. "Miss Rosamund Grey, a new student. I know nothing more of her. You do not like her, do you?"

"I never saw anyone I disliked so much!" broke out Mary. "She seems to me like a snake woman!"

"Come, come!" he cried, laughing kindly, "you must not be so vehement against a stranger. I don't know that I much like her myself, but I do not call her names."

"I cannot play before her; her eyes quite unnerve me. She dislikes me furiously; I can detect that."

"I will have her time for lesson changed, so that you shall not meet," said Mr. Shelley, kindly.

But Mary had to meet Miss Grey at sight-singing and rehearsals. That persevering young woman seemed to have set up a perverse pleasure in Mary Silver's companionship. She was for ever seeking it, and only, Mary thought, that she might sting her with covert taunts and bitter words.

During rehearsals she would put herself at Mary's side. Mr. Templeton generally joined them, when Miss Grey would monopolise his attention: not a word, scarcely, could he give to Mary.

"How was it, Frank, that on your return from Cornwall, you never told me you had made Miss Grey's acquaintance?" Mary had asked, when she once found an opportunity.

"Oh, it—it did not occur to me, I suppose," he carelessly answered.

"I wish, said Mary, taking courage to say what was in her heart, though her voice trembled, "I wish, Frank, you had never met her."

"Why do you wish that?"

"I do not think it will be well for you. I do not think she will be a good companion for you."

"Why not? What do you know against her?"

"I don't know anything. I *feel* it."

"Nonsense, Mary, you are prejudiced," he answered, laughing lightly. "Girls never do like one another."

Rosamund Grey might not be a girl likely to do people much good, as Mary put it, but she was a brilliant girl, and beautiful; and she appeared to have set her fancy upon Mr. Frank Templeton. So, little by little, Mary saw her lover becoming estranged from her, and she could only sit by silently, and look at him with wistful eyes.

The little rift within the lute went on widening. Frank never came in the choir now, and there were no more pleasant walks down to the station afterwards. He would sit with Miss Grey in another part of the concert-room, and escort *her* away from it, not Mary.

Gradually, but surely, his visits to Vine Cottage ceased. Old Mrs. Silver, accustomed to be treated with courtesy and not caprice, felt very angry with the young man. She observed to Mary that she felt sorry ever to have given him so warm a welcome, and that the man was not worth a remembrance.

The only time Mary could now count upon seeing Frank was at their organ lesson, and then they were never alone. And thus, and thus, they drifted apart.

On Christmas day, the day of peace and goodwill to all men, Mary neither saw nor heard anything of the one most dear to her. She did not see much more of him when the school met again.

Lent approached, and passed onwards to its close, and the estrangement still continued. Mary's heart was very sore within her, and the sad and sombre melodies of the passion hymns were well in keeping with her own feelings. Who would not be touched by the grand old tune "St. Bride," every note of which sounds like the sob of a stricken heart? The great voice of her favourite organ had never been to Mary more human and appealing than it was now; it seemed to be praying with her, striving to comfort her. She had spent many hours of happiness with it, and the hours she now spent with it were sorrowful hours; but it was still, as ever, her faithful friend.

Easter came in, but the "Queen of Feasts" did not bring back Mary Silver's lost lover. How different an Easter was it to Mary's last, only one little year ago! She was traversing that painful bit of life past which so many of its pilgrims have had, alas, to tread before her, earning their bitter experience, as so many more will have to tread again.

Spring passed on into summer, the roses blossomed and fell, the end of the term came again, and Frank had never come back to his allegiance. It was Mary's last term; she was to leave the school now. She still lived on in the "hope deferred that maketh the heart sick," so fond and credulous is loving woman!

The long vacation wore away. And when the School opened again and the students reassembled, Miss Grey came back to it as Mrs. Frank Templeton.

Mary already knew it. On the last day of the vacation Clara Latimer—engaged to spend the day with her at Vine Cottage—carried down the news.

"Don't let it disturb you, Mary, dear," said Clara. "I once thought he paid you a good deal of attention, and that you—you rather liked him; but he was never worthy of you."

Mary did not cry or faint. She had turned very white at the first moment, but she was able to maintain an outward calmness.

"Will you do me a great kindness, Clara," she said, in a low tone: "not to speak of it, or of him, any more."

And Miss Latimer understood.

But in the evening, when her guest had gone, Mary went up to her

own room and shut herself into it. For a long time she stayed there alone, while she faced and fought the first brunt of her trouble. After that, she went down, quiet and dry-eyed, to begin a new life.

A life, as it seemed to her then, out of which all the sweetness and the hope had departed, and in which all the old landmarks were changed. No more going to the School. She could not bear even to visit it now. No more awaking in the morning to the feverish hope of what the day might bring forth for her; no more of the disappointment at night, and its dull, dark pain. Nothing was left her now but her dear old friend the organ at St. John's church, and the monotonous duties in her old home, where she had lived and dreamed her dream of happiness, but which would never seem the same home to her again.

And so the days go on. And the good old lady is as cheerful as ever, and her grand-daughter strives to be. She has a good many music pupils, and plenty of organ-playing to do; and she has taken to help with the parish work, and is not unhappy. Time, the great healer, is laying his hand upon her wound, and it is closing gently. Only her face is not so bright as of yore; the ready smile of former days is rare now; and she has lost her old habit of singing as she goes about the house. Sometimes in the evening, when her work is done, she sits pensively gazing into the fire; and then her grandmother, who has her own fancies about matters, knows that she is thinking of the past.

Once she spoke of Frank Templeton. It was to Miss Latimer. "Is he altered at all, Clara?" she said. "I know you see him sometimes."

The question was put quite suddenly, following upon a silence, and no name was mentioned, but Clara knew at once.

"He looks older and harder," she replied. "He is getting on splendidly in the profession; but report says his marriage is a most unhappy one. His wife—but I'll say nothing of her, and indeed I know nothing to say. She is not liked by anyone."

One day, when Mary had business in town, in walking along Brook Street towards Grosvenor Square, she saw Frank Templeton. They met face to face. A deep red flushed his countenance; Mary was conscious that she turned snow white. A cold, ceremonious bow was exchanged, and each passed on.

And for the present that ends it; ends all that is left of Mary Silver's heart life. She says and thinks she will never marry. Probably she never will. But other girls who have suffered from man's faithlessness, and have said the same and vowed it, have found themselves persuaded to break their vow.

UNDER NORTHERN SKIES.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," &c.

Bornholm.

We left Copenhagen one fair evening for Bornholm, an island of the Baltic. The little steamer loosed her moorings about five o'clock, and passed through the crowd of shipping never absent from the broad waters and endless quays of the Danish Capital. We gradually fell away from the many features of the town, now grown friendly and familiar: towers and domes and steeples; and public buildings that here and there reared their magnificent heads above their lesser surrounding lights.

We went down in broad sunshine. Past lighthouses, and Danish men-of-war, and windmills that stood out conspicuously against the evening sky, and reminded one of the flat shores of Holland. All this faded away, and gave place to the equally flat shores of Sweden. The sun set in a gorgeous bank of clouds. Twilight crept over the earth, colours faded from the sky, and stars came out. It never grew quite dark. The night was so still and beautiful, it seemed impossible to turn in. Lights flashed from vessels going to and fro, from numberless fishing craft, those "toilers of the sea" who earn their daily bread by night. The passage was supposed to take ten or twelve hours, and we ought to reach Rönne, the chief town of Bornholm, at four or five in the morning. About half way, when daylight had fled, we passed the steamer coming from Rönne. Signals were exchanged, greetings were shouted from opposite decks, and each vessel went her way.

The night wore on. A light broke in the east. Beams darted

upwards like an Aurora Borealis. A mountain of fire seemed to be gradually rising above the horizon. Nothing more gorgeous could be imagined. This was long before the sun rose like a chariot wheel, flooding and flaming the sky with a sea of gold, liquid, shifting, ebbing and flowing, as it were, in pulsations of light. The skipper of the little steamer was concerned for our welfare, and thought an hour's sleep worth all the effects of nature that ever were seen or heard of. Mountains of light and gorgeous colourings were all very well in their way, but sleep was better. He spoke a little English, and like most of the skippers in these northern seas, was anxious to do everything in his power for the comfort of his passengers, especially if they were strangers in the land. When he found we had only three days to devote to Bornholm he was full of regret, and advised us to prolong the time if possible.

"You will see it," he said, "and that is all. Your plan must be to hire a carriage for the three days, which will just manage to take you round the island and show you its chief features. But a week would have been well devoted to this interesting spot."

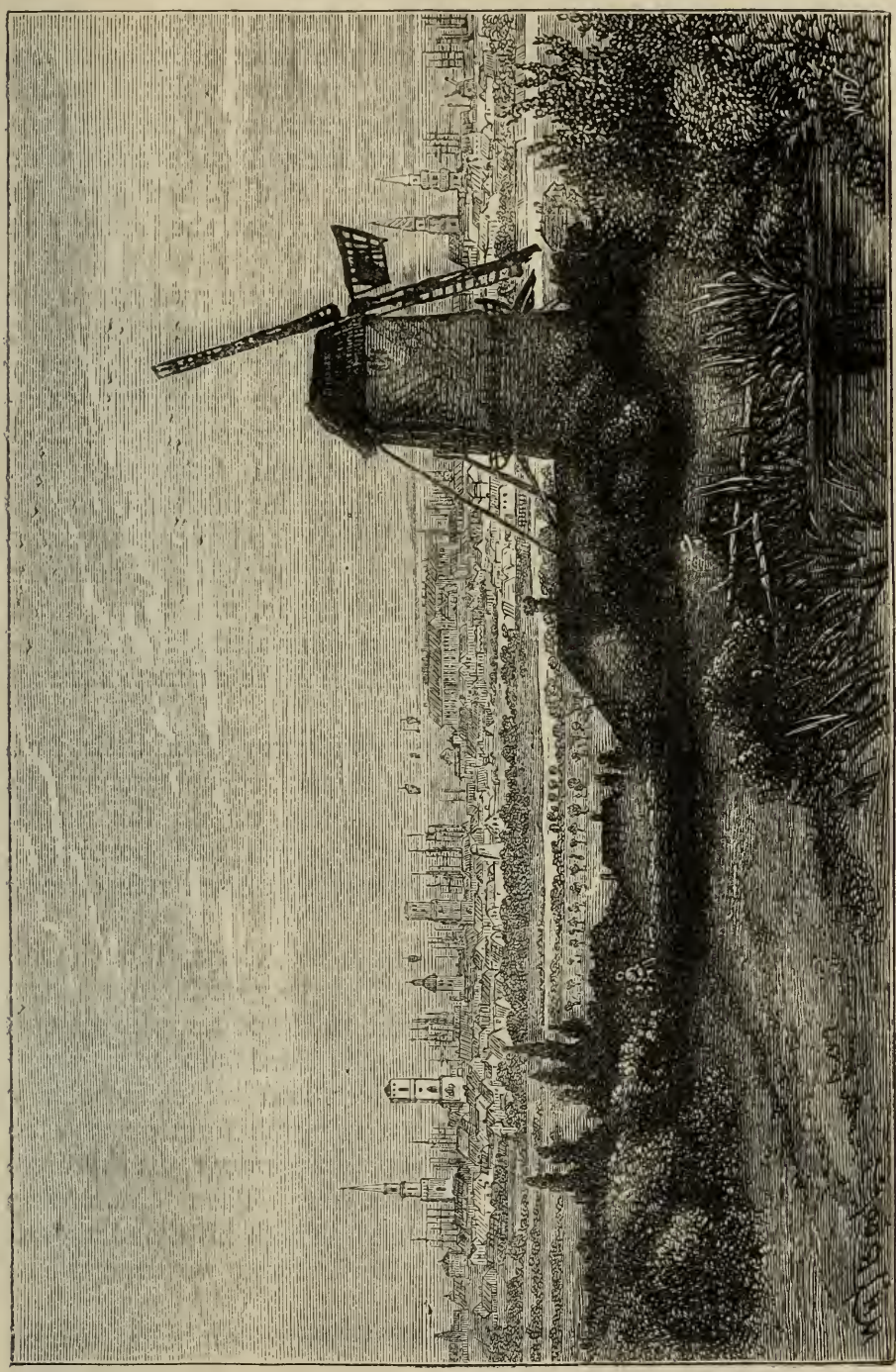
And we afterwards found that though, in those three days, we saw everything the island contained, yet a week might easily have been spent lingering and lounging quietly about the beauties of Bornholm.

About three o'clock in the morning the flat coast of the island opened up, and an hour later, in the full blaze of sunrise, we steamed into the little harbour.

The town looked quaint and primitive, uncommon and unsophisticated. A collection of small houses, of red slanting roofs, of windmills and a solitary church spire. There was little shipping in the harbour. Everything was on a small scale, including the lighthouse, that some time ago was found to be inconveniently placed, and was removed bodily some fifty yards lower down. The first impression was singularly pleasant. There was an individuality about the place that was very refreshing. We had seen nothing like it before, and were evidently out of the world's beaten track. All this promised well for our three days.

We were soon alongside. The skipper beckoned to a decent-looking man, who took charge of our traps and led the way. Aurora was still abroad, and we made acquaintance with Rönne in the first flush and beauty of early morning. The streets were quiet and deserted. The houses, small and built of wood painted many colours, were clean and fresh looking. Our way led through the poorer part of the town, given up to fishermen and labourers. To the left, a steep decline ended in a timber yard, a pebbly beach, and a bran new bathing establishment: the latter a primitive arrangement in the shape of a roughly built stage of loose planks some fifty yards long, leading to a number of little floating rooms all under one roof. This was in charge of a good woman, who surprised us by her ready English, until we found that she had spent many years in

America. There she had made some money and returned to her native country when attacked by the mal du pays in middle age.



COPENHAGEN.

Who is it says that in middle age all the failings of early youth return with tenfold force? And if it be so, is it the last throw of the Arch Enemy laying wait for man's soul? Then let the fight be sharp, and quick the victory.

This good woman was wise in her generation. She had not crossed the sea and dwelt in the tents of the stranger for nothing. Her experiences in the new world were brought to bear upon the old: and she charged E.—who could not see water without a longing to plunge into his native element—for his one bath the price of half a dozen, with the most innocent air possible. For presently, whilst I waited and looked about, and revelled in the lapping water and all the signs of a primitive and quiet life, up came a bevy of fair and quite fashionable girls, who paid collectively the exact amount that E. had given for his solitary plunge. No; the woman was wiser than she looked; we were disappointed.

But this is anticipating, for our first devotions were paid not to the beach but to the hotel. Following the guide and turning up a street, pebbly paved and grass grown, we dived under a great gateway into an old-fashioned courtyard. It might have come into existence centuries ago. A low building with slanting roofs and latticed windows and overhanging verandahs, beautiful from very age, where creepers trailed and twined and hung in wild and graceful profusion. Once within the house, all beauty and picturesqueness disappeared. The rooms were dark and uncomfortable, and not even particularly clean. But behind the house again, was a garden: a wilderness of roses and other flowers; a cultivated desert, full of brilliant blossoms and tantalising fruit trees—for the currants were all picked and the cherries were not ripe.

The people of the inn were not more satisfactory than their fruit trees. They were uncivil and disobliging in manner, unreasonable in their charges; the only instance we met with on all the island. Everywhere else the people were moderate, civil and hospitable, would put themselves out to point your way, and often refused any return for a service rendered.

Happily we had not many hours to devote to Rönne, though the inn people tried their best to detain us. First they declared no carriage was to be had. This excuse disposed of, the porter, who seemed head waiter, boots, and general factotum all rolled into one, disappeared: to return presently with a driver and an extraordinary vehicle that was half hay-cart and half a running platform on wheels: a sort of French cameon. In such an arrangement the hardiest traveller would soon have been reduced to a jelly. Then Jehu, seeing that his way was not to be our way, rattled off with his shandaradan, for which he substituted a very decent landau: and we departed in comfort if not in state.

Thus commenced our three days' drive through Bornholm; one of the most charming drives imaginable, three of the pleasantest days anyone could possibly desire. The weather was worthy of Paradise. Unclouded sunshine and blue skies enlivened our way and gilded the laughing hours. Everything favoured us. Jehu, finding he was not to have things his own way, quietly gave in to ours, and became

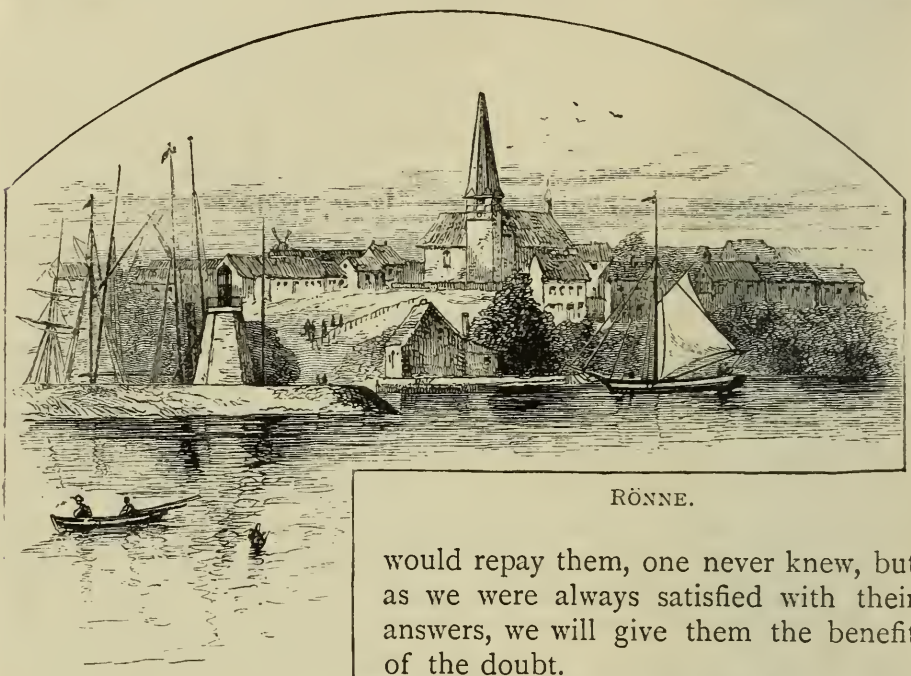
a devoted slave, amiable and obliging throughout. In the end, it is true, he lost his character by charging half as much again as his bargain, and with the inn people to back him it had to be paid under protest. We could not lose our boat and remain behind for the sake of resisting an unjust demand. But it was evident that he had been put up to his dishonesty by the porter, and the two finally went off to a quiet corner to divide the spoil.

Our first day's drive was also one of the most memorable. Bornholm is a scene of overflowing fertility, prosperity and abundance. Everyone seemed well to do. Everywhere barns were filled with plenty and presses burst out with new wine. We were for ever meeting great waggon loads of hay piled high, fresh and crisp and sweet smelling. Everywhere there were fields of waving, ripening, golden corn. We had hardly ever seen their equal. The cherry orchards were legion, and the cherries had only one drawback. They were ripe, luscious, inexhaustible, but generally grew so high as to be out of reach of ordinary mortals. It was vain to ape the fox in the fable: there could be nothing sour about those large, red, glorious berries. Bornholm was veritably a Paradise; a Canaan amidst islands; a land of corn and wine, and no less of roses than of cherries.

We soon left the town behind us and found ourselves in the midst of this fertile country. The roads, long and straight, were wonderfully well-made and well-kept, and facilitated one's progress. Our way led somewhat inland, and the sea to the left was seldom visible. By mid-day we had reached Hasle, our first halting place: a small, primitive village chiefly given over to fishermen. The waters of the Baltic plashed within a few feet of its houses; the brown, sloping, pebbly beach was lively with fishing-boats drawn up high and dry above the tide. Not very much could be said for some of the cottage interiors. They were dark and gloomy, brown and discoloured, as if by constant peat fires whose smoke had no way of escape. To look in at some of the open doorways satisfied one's curiosity without exploring further. Half-dressed children played about the doorsteps, where also lounged mothers and sisters, talking with a gravity which seemed a part of their nature, and staring with great, enquiring eyes at the wayfarers. Some of them were stooping over a washing-tub just inside the doorway; and others, grey-headed old women, whose sun had long passed its meridian, knitting stockings, looked up without pausing in their work. But all were distinguished—men, women, and children, clothes and skin, and general aspect—by a dark brown tinge, as if they, too, as well as their little homes, had become tanned by peat smoke. It threw a certain picturesque colouring over all; an artistic effect pleasant to contemplate upon paper, but not so pleasant in close and familiar contact. We called it the Brown Village, and it left upon us a curious, not by any means disagreeable impression.

The inn was decent, and the people civil. The house was quiet

and clean, and we were in absolute possession. It was not very much more than a cottage upon a large scale, but the good people placed before us an unpretending meal that was yet far better than we had expected, was decently served, and dressed with that savoury cunning none possess better than those primitive cooks who, living in out-of-the-way places, are often thrown upon their resources, and have to make much out of little. Necessity is the mother of invention. One thing we often noticed in these remote little inns. The people, when asked for the bill, never seemed to know what to charge, but hesitated and demurred, and evidently went through some painful mental problem. Whether considering how much they might ask, or how little



RÖNNE.

would repay them, one never knew, but as we were always satisfied with their answers, we will give them the benefit of the doubt.

This inn also had its garden, well stocked with fruit and flowers, but also a sort of cultivated wilderness. It sloped downwards to brown sheds and boathouses and the beach, where the quiet sea broke lazily over the stones with a lapping, soothing, sleepy sound.

But we had a long walk before us to keep us in a state of consciousness. After leaving Hasle, the quiet little brown thoroughfares and all the brown people; after picking a rose in the garden and satisfying the hesitating but moderate claims of the inn people; Jehu came round at the appointed moment in great style; energy and vigour in man and horses. Evidently all their rest had not been spent in idleness. Away we went, followed by numerous gazers, brown-faced, brown-eyed, intensely serious: all with a silence of speech and attitude we chose to interpret into a benediction.

Jehu drove to a certain point beyond which the carriage could not pass: a large white farmhouse, substantially built, with great barns

and stables and out-houses. It looked lonely and deserted. Everyone was away working in distant fields, making and carrying hay. Here we left the carriage to pursue its way inland, on the high road, to Hammeren, the extreme point of the island. Our way led by the sea, over the wonderful cliffs of Bornholm. So we parted company. Jehu whipped up his horses and went clattering down the road in a cloud of dust and consequence. We passed beyond the farm buildings and found ourselves on long stretches of greensward, inexpressibly refreshing after the hot, white road we had lately travelled. Sheep grazed and wandered at will, the very emblem of stupidity and peace and contentment. We found ourselves overlooking the Baltic, far above the level of the sea; and to right and left stretched the high cliffs and the broken, beautiful coast of this favoured island.

We went on and on, and the walk seemed to grow more and more beautiful. Far below stretched the Baltic, blue and placid as it is not often seen. Small fishing boats, with brown sails here and there upon its surface, suggested Hasle, but for the most part it was a clear, unbroken surface of water; a painted ocean; sea, horizon and sky all mingling in one far off, hazy distance.

The coast was broken and diversified even more than most rocky coasts. It stretched out in points, and circled in bays, and swept round in crescents; a scene and series of magnificent rocks, often arching upwards like the fluted pillars and aisles of a cathedral. Small alcoves and recesses became harbours of refuge, where boats were drawn up safe and sure from the perils of winds and waves. Seagulls flew from point to point across these vast amphitheatres, whirling and clanging and filling the air with their wild cries, diving in and out of the holes and crevices of the rocks. It was a wild scene. The free air was about us, bracing, exhilarating, health-giving as we had yet found it nowhere under these Northern Skies. Nor anywhere had we seen such a view, or revelled in such a walk. Wild, deserted, out of the world, away from all sight and sound of civilisation.

Moors stretched above us, green and undulating. Our path lay at the edge of the cliff. It seemed so little trodden that often it was lost on the cliff side, or amongst the gorse and heather that grew around. We found ourselves overhanging deep precipices, those perpendicular walls of mighty stone, hollowed and honeycombed, that stretched down to the rugged beach, washed by the waters of the Baltic. One longed for a rough sea and a rushing wind, for the furious dash of waves beating and breaking against those mighty bulwarks. What a glorious sight it would be, though safer as we had it to-day. This pathway, exposed and insecure, was not too easy to follow, and in a tempest would be almost impassable.

Then came "St. John's Chapel;" an almost perpendicular descent in the rocks by means of rough steps, partly of wood, partly cut out of the rock; a sort of Jacob's ladder. On the beach was a small cave hewn out of a detached fragment of stone, which formed the

Chapel. Probably no congregation had ever been found to fill it. The descent was strewn with wild flowers and ferns that grew in every crack and crevice where root could enter. Over the pebbly beach the sea for ever ebbed and flowed; ever sang its burden to the rocks, the caves, the seagulls, and the sky that covered all this desolate and lonely coast.

It was harder work to remount this Jacob's ladder. The steps were steep and slippery, and one often narrowly escaped a backward roll that would have proved neither pleasant nor profitable. Here and there a stray sheep looked down upon us, as if wondering why we worked so hard in all this blazing sunshine. They skipped from point to point, surefooted as the chamois, and stood on six inches of ground overlooking shuddering depths—but without a shudder. Why could not mortals do the same?

Once more at the top we paused to realise and enjoy the scene; this gathering together of sea and rocks and sparkling air and expanse of blue sky, and seagulls soaring and wheeling with wild clang. Oh, the delight of these grand and silent places, wherever found; these mighty rocks, this restless ocean, these eloquent solitudes. It is heaven to be amongst them—as it was that afternoon. There is no greater pleasure on earth, none more pure and wholesome.

Here and there across the moors one caught sight of distant fields, and men and women at work, and hay that fell to the sickle or was being heaped on to waggons. Then again all this would be lost as our capricious pathway suddenly dipped half-way down the rocks, where we startled the seagulls and sent them seawards with a wild remonstrance against this invasion of their territories. Whilst every now and then a pause was necessary, lest the next step should land us in air, over the steep side, to join the fragments on the shores until such time as the sea claimed us for its own, gathered us to its mighty bosom, and chanted us its eternal cradle song for a requiem.

The afternoon was on the wane when we reached a quaint and curious village or hamlet, which seemed to have nestled itself in between the rocks and the sea, so that if a mighty wave were one day to come, it might all be swept into death and oblivion. A strange spot, with hardly a foothold upon the earth. A narrow thoroughfare, rough and undulating; a cluster of houses eccentrically thrown about; small cottages inhabited by fishermen and others, with a tiny beach below them, where boats were moored. The place had a singular and picturesque, but somewhat poverty-stricken, aspect, as if it had no part or lot in the good fortunes of this prosperous little island.

Near one of the small cottages the road divided, and we had to ask our way. The good woman came out, and with much politeness indicated the somewhat intricate path we had to follow. Five minutes later we stood face to face with another puzzle in the shape of two roads. Hesitating, and turning round, there was the woman

still looking after us. Anticipating our need, she had stood and watched, and now, with energetic signals, made it plain that we must keep to the left.

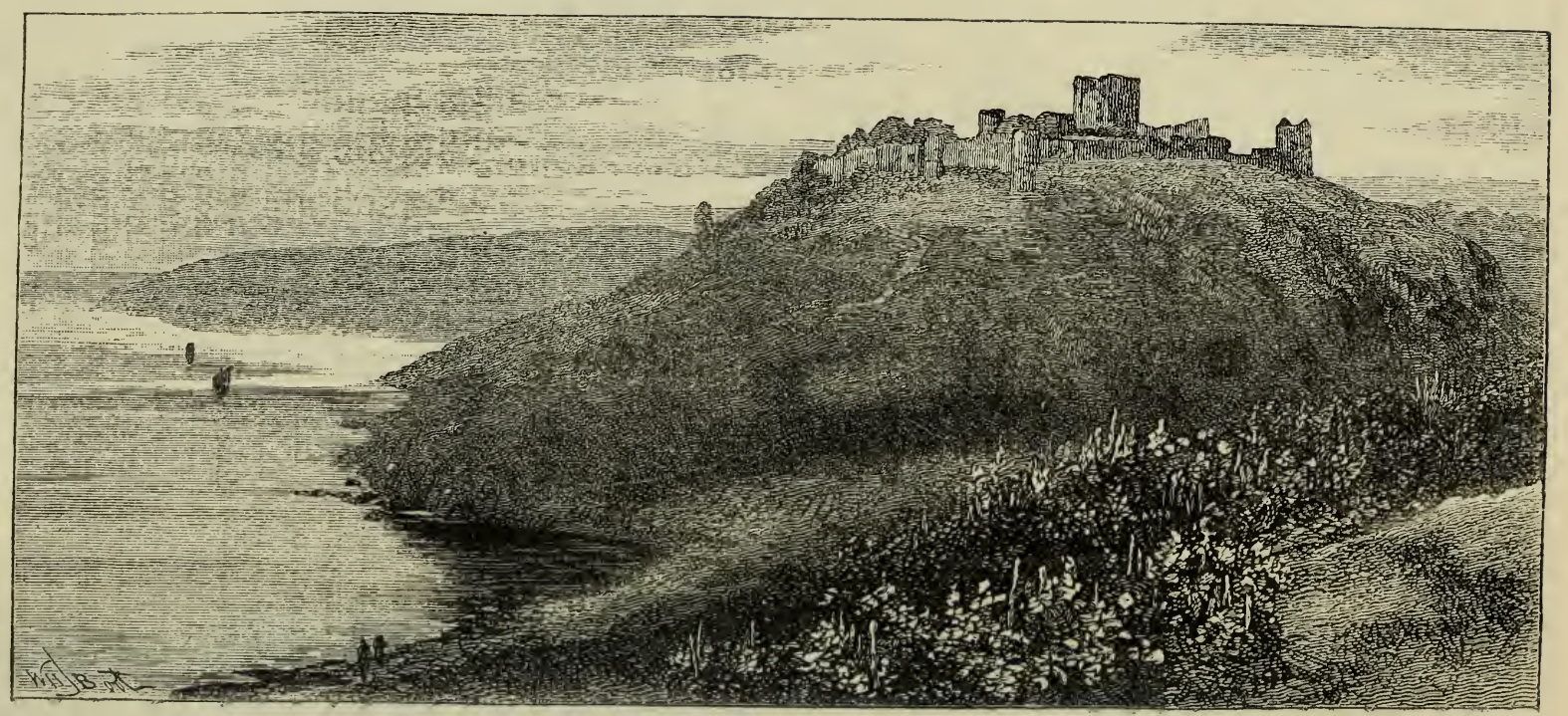
Desolate and remote this village, which was called Vang, might be; primitive and poor its inhabitants; but barbarous or uncivilised they were not. Kindly and hospitable they are; and, as already remarked, these virtues do not spring from interested motives.

Not far off now, crowning the heights above us, were the ruins of Hammershuus, the end of our pilgrimage. A winding path led to them through a copse or thicket of brushwood and stunted trees, where ferns and wild flowers grew in profusion. Stiles had to be overcome, and here and there small dykes tested one's leaping powers. The steep cliffs of the earlier part of our walk had disappeared, and with them the extreme grandeur of the coast, but the ruins before us stood out boldly on the slopes that were washed by the Baltic. It was a tug to reach them; the final struggle; but at last we stood within the ruins, looking down from crumbling walls on all the change and decay of man's art and handiwork; looking upon the rocky slopes, eternal in their might and majesty.

These mediæval ruins date back to the 13th century, and were then in the hands of the Church. So, also, at one time was the whole island. They are some of the most extensive ruins in Europe; and to antiquarians some of the most interesting. But the whole island possesses a store of antiquities of great value; runic stones, and circular churches, and other evidences of its ancient history.

Change and decay have set their seal upon the ruins of Hammershuus. Many portions have entirely disappeared, and probably more would have done so but for occasional restorations. It was first built by Erlandsen, Archbishop of Lund, and in those unsettled times it frequently changed hands: now belonging to the Church, now to the State. Crowning those desolate and distant rocks, it must have been a grand and noble object; from its remoteness, a sort of wonder of the world. Fierce were the fights it witnessed, great the bloodshed, legion the prisoners that languished in its dungeons. Some of these dungeons have preserved substantial traces of their existence, as if they had been the most solidly built portions of the great structures.

In those days it may be that no other building was in sight beyond the dependencies of the great castle, and of these no traces remain. Even now the ruins stand out alone and desolate, with no modern tenement to disturb their romantic influence and impression. But on the other side, in the hollow, beyond the wood and the wild heather, near the lighthouse of Hammeren, is an inn that, with its numerous buildings, forms quite a small colony. It owes its existence, and whatever prosperity it may enjoy, to the ruins; and in this way, as well as in other ways, the deeds we do live after us. From the castle heights this small cluster of houses looked buried in



RUINS OF HAMMERSHUUS.

a hollow, sheltered from the North and East winds, which blow here with a mighty vengeance.

The inn looked quiet and deserted, but when we reached it we found every room occupied by a crowd of noisy people; a disturbing influence that gave one a rude shock. Excursionists, Danes or Swedes, who, staying in Bornholm for a season, had come over for the day in waggonettes, and now made the place hideous with "the loud laughter which bespeaks the vacant mind."

Here we were to have met Jehu, but though hours had passed since we had seen him disappear in a cloud of dust, he had not yet turned up. This was rather bad behaviour on his part. All our goods and chattels for the time being were in his possession. Nothing here could be replaced, and we were not in a condition for a walking tour through the island.

To pass away the time we ordered dinner and inspected the premises. But the larder had been severely taxed, and we had to be content with very modest fare. In comparison with this, we had feasted sumptuously at Hasle. The whole inn seemed in possession of the enemy; and we felt towards them as Church and State must have felt towards each other in the middle ages, when fighting for castle and crown. We asked if they could give us rooms in case Jehu failed altogether, and they produced a couple of dark closets which would have banished sleep from the most weary.

Opposite the inn a sloping hill hid the sea and broke the strength of the North wind. Here cattle grazed and led a quiet life. And here we found a traveller who, like ourselves, had come with surprise upon this noisy crowd. He was a Frenchman, walking leisurely through the island; a more satisfactory way of seeing places when time and physical strength are in favour of it. He had spread his rug upon the green slopes, this Frenchman, and thrown himself down with a book. But there was no peace to be had even here. Every cow came up in turn to look at him, with great questioning eyes and horns, until they forced him to move on and leave them masters of the situation. The sea broke and plashed not many yards away, and in rough weather the wind carries the spray and foam into the very inn itself, and doors and windows are kept fast closed. Yet one would rather have encountered those rough blasts than this noisy assembly.

The shades of evening were beginning to fall when Jehu at length made his appearance. He looked conscious and guilty, and evidently had spent the afternoon in some well-known haunt, where possibly he had boon companions and a favourite brew. With the exception of a small town here and there on the sea-coast, the houses and settlements in Bornholm are few and far between, and the drivers are sure of a welcome from every door they pass. They bring news from the outer world, produce a little variety and excitement in lives that must be terribly monotonous. He was extremely anxious to remain the

night in our present quarters; but without pushing on, our three days' task would not be accomplished. Therefore, after a short rest to the horses—they must have rested most of the afternoon—we once more set off on our travels.

The road was gloomy and desolate, but a certain grandeur about it was made more impressive by the gathering twilight, which here lingers long. On the extreme northern point of the island to our left the lighthouse of Hammerberg was already flashing out its warning. A small lake reposed between us and the rising hills: "well stocked with fish," said Jehu, who by extra civility was trying to make up for playing truant. "Would we like to drive round and inspect the lighthouse?" But we preferred to keep on our way and lose no more time.

Turning southward, we came to Sandvig, pretty and picturesque, but little more than a fishing village. It was built on the sloping hills, and the cottages stretched down almost to the very edge of the shore. There was something so primitive and interesting about it; it looked so clean and quiet—as if here one need fear no inroads of noisy excursionists—that one felt half inclined to put up at Sandvig for the night. But, whatever might be our own impression, it was evidently no favourite spot of the driver's. Here was no favourite brew or boon companion. We saw it as plainly as if he had said so. He whipped up his cattle, and swept past the little houses and the quiet church, and had only one reply to any remark: "Very bad hotel." Perhaps it was true. Certainly it must have been humble and unpretending. But so was the inn near the ruins of Hammershuus, where he had shown himself regardless of consequences by suggesting a halt for the night.

And we almost wondered at our strength of mind in leaving Hammershuus, in spite of the noisy crowd and bad rooms. For there was a great charm about the place, a solemnity about the scenery difficult to describe. The disposition of the hills and their undulations; the great stretches of green, quiet slopes; the remoteness of the inn from the world; the sea rolling up, breaking and surging, ebbing and flowing, within a few feet of us; all threw out their subtle influence. Above all, one felt impressed by those rocky slopes crowned by the ruins that stood out so clearly and sharply against the calm evening sky; ruins that carried one back to the middle ages and threw their glamour and romance over the spot, conjuring up pictures of by-gone glory, when the Church had so much power in her own hands, and did not always use it with discretion.

It had been difficult to tear oneself away from those ruins within an hour or two of seeing them for the first time. To turn one's back upon them was to do so for ever. Life is short, and there is much to be done, and it was improbable that we should ever see Bornholm again. We longed to see the ruins in the glow of early morning; when the sun, rising out there across the sea, in the East, threw all its

beauty upon the water and gilded the crumbling ruins with its magic touch, bringing back life to the dead. Perhaps, too, all the impression of our afternoon's walk was upon us, and it does not do to multiply impressions too quickly. So, many reasons had conspired to keep us that night at the little inn under the shadow of the ruins: not least of all, perhaps, the fact that the walk, with its winding paths and Jacob's ladders, had been terribly tiring, and rest had seemed for the present the most desirable thing on earth.

Yet we went our way, in spite of all. In spite of the Frenchman who found no resting-place on the slopes for the cows, and who had begged us to keep him company in the solitary inn. But we pointed out to him that though solitary, it was by no means deserted, and though surrounded by desolation without, it was noisy enough within. Our time, too, was limited. And so we had gone our way in spite of Jehu, who evidently left behind him attractions he was loth to part with. But we had no pity for him. We left the ruins clearly outlined against the sky, gave them a last, long, lingering gaze, listened to their solemn message, and saw them no more.

We had our reward. The drive to Allinge, our night's resting-place, was the most wild and weird bit of scenery we encountered during the whole three days. In broad daylight it would have lost nearly all its charm and effect. Gloomy, grand and desolate, remote from the world and all evidences of life, it made an impression upon us which yet remains. In daylight, also, all the beauty and depth and desolation of the little lake would have been absent. Even Sandvig itself might have looked less picturesque and alluring. But in situation it will always be far preferable to Allinge.

On we went, through an undulating country, the sea close to us on the left, and always visible. Before long the lights of Allinge shone out in the gathering gloom, and we clattered through the long street of the little town. It did not look half so picturesque as Sandvig, nor half so quiet, whilst there was more pretence about it. Men lounged about and stared lazily—it was their hour of repose. Work was over for the day for some of them, and had not commenced for those who went out upon the deep and spent their nights toiling. From the open windows of one small house there came sounds of music and song, whilst a small crowd of people, quite fashionable in evening dress, moved about the lighted rooms. A golden-haired youth—the jeunesse dorée of Allinge—was bending sentimentally over a syren, equally young and fair, from whom proceeded the sweet sounds. Others were elegantly turning over photographs.

All this we caught at a glance as we passed hastily. It was like a tableau vivant, vivid in its impressions, thrown out in strong relief by the light within contrasted with the shadows without—though it was not yet dark. The only wonder was that there should be so much display; windows open, uncurtained, exposed to the gaze of the loungers, who hung about and peered curiously. Perhaps it is the

habit of this small place ; and habit is second nature. The familiar ceases to be strange.

Allinge possesses some 800 inhabitants. It consists very much of one long street, built almost on the water's edge. Opposite the very house just described was the small harbour : a harbour within a harbour, as it were ; so that little vessels coming in performed a zigzag. It was strongly constructed, with a small lighthouse. A few fishing boats lay in its shelter, and at low water we found that the less said about the smells the better. Just beyond the harbour was the inn, to which Jehu conducted us in state. We passed under a gate-way into a great court-yard ; a dog barked us a welcome ; lights gleamed in the windows ; there was a small stir and commotion ; a fat landlady attended by a bustling hand-maiden came out upon the steps.

No doubt about our remaining here for the night. Rooms were quickly given to us, small but clean and satisfactory. They looked on to the sea, and we could watch the fishing-boats putting out. The whole place was primitive, but it was quiet. The rooms opened on to the general sitting-room, where travellers took their meals, and where we had to deposit our boots. How travellers manage who, on arriving, find a roomful, it was difficult to imagine. It cannot be a comfortable sensation to put down your boots in the face of a dozen people at supper. Besides, a man without his boots feels taken at a disadvantage. Yet this once happened at Allerheiligen, in the Black Forest.

We had arrived late at night and gone straight to our room. Presently we opened the door, expecting vacancy and a passage. But behold a large room, once the refectory of the monks, and to-night the refectory of lay men and women all earnestly engaged in supper. There seemed to be a thousand present, and probably there were at least forty. In a moment eighty eyes were focussed in one direction. We were probably taken for a ghost, for these were ghostly quarters, and we were in ghostly costume, ready to step into our well-earned couch. The sensation was horrible. Some of the ladies screamed, and perhaps some of them fainted ; whilst we beat a hasty retreat, and mentally consigned the whole company to the regions of the departed monks.

Here at Allinge we found no such disaster. The sitting-room was empty and quiet. There might be ghosts lurking about, but they were invisible. We do not dread the spirits of another world half so much as the grosser substances of this. Very soon the whole place was in repose. We watched for a time the lights of the fishing craft upon the calm, clear waters of the Baltic. Now and then a far off voice or a song came rolling quietly over the tranquil surface. Then we, too, turned in, and soon all was lost in oblivion. At Allerheiligen our dreams had been haunted by a myriad eyes, but here we slept the dreamless sleep of the just : until early, too early, the next morning, the chambermaid woke us to another day, and we found the sun already high and brilliant in the heavens.

MANY WATERS QUENCH NOT LOVE.

(Founded on Fact.)

"WHAT was all that commotion about just now?"

"Oh, nothing. It was only some stupid old man who had not been in the town for ever so long going by, and Mrs. Brown called us to see. What have I done with my gloves? I *know* I brought them in here. Oh, there they are, under that chair. What plagues things are!—Coming, Annette, coming!"

"Did she say who the old man was?"

But the words were spoken to empty air, for the heroine of the gloves was already flying down stairs in the best approved costume for the fashionable promenade.

Her great-aunt, Miss Dorothy Fielding, leant back, meditating, in her chair. She was a cripple of many years' standing from rheumatism and sciatica, and could move but little without assistance.

She was also very old; but although her face had many wrinkles there was abundant play of expression about it yet, and living evidence that she had by no means outlived her faculties. An ordinary face it never had been, although, equally, she had never been beautiful. In her youth some had called her plain, some good-looking, some pretty; but full of life and expression that face had always been; full of character, and that no ordinary one; full of vivacity, the light of which after four-score years was even yet unquenched.

Her eyes were dark brown, sensible, true and very kindly. Anyone with a degree of imagination in their brains would have felt certain her companionship even now would not be dull; so sympathetic, bright, and, in the evening-time of life, so placidly content was the countenance that looked forth under the matronly cap and thick grey hair.

She had been full of love and lovers with the brightest, once upon a time; she had dreamt many a waking dream, had been attractive and popular; but she had never married. She was Miss Fielding now, as she had been at the beginning of the chapter.

The young people around her were on the whole a selfish, preoccupied set, who had few thoughts to spare from dress and gaiety, and who would as soon have thought of giving up one of their pleasures to sit for an hour with Aunt Dorothy as of being hospital nurses.

When she had come amongst them some months previously, she had looked forward to being their confidante on various points. All her soul kindled yet over a real love affair, and she could sympathise also with minor matters of small flirtation and girlish fun. But even

she could make little of these great-nieces of hers. Her innate good taste recoiled from their fastness, with its unscrupulous stratagems, their loud-spoken ill-nature towards other girls, and the utter absence of all love, worthy the name, from their scheming, worldly, and unwomanly love affairs.

Their father had taken this house, which was large and handsome, for the four months' season at Fairbeach, and as he was very fond of his aunt, and rooms could be spared for her use, he had asked her to come to them for that period. Old Miss Fielding, being very comfortably off, had never sunk into the immovable habits that might have been expected from her age and infirmities, and she accepted the invitation and enjoyed the change. She had long ago made her intentions plain as regarded the money she had to leave; it was all to go to this, her only nephew, with the exception only of a few legacies to old servants, friends, and God-children.

One of these last was her niece Laura; and whether it is that people are by nature like their God-parents or not, Laura was very much the nicest of the four Miss Fieldings. She had a happy disposition, and could bear a disappointment without going into depths of despair or getting thoroughly cross until the next diversion dawned, as her sisters did. It was, alas, a very uneducated character, for Mr. Fielding was easy-going and over indulgent to his children, while their mother was a worldly woman of lady-like exterior, and very comfortable principles as regarded coarse-minded schemes for marrying her daughters "well."

Laura, therefore, as might have been expected, was no paragon of perfection, but she was obviously improvable, than which few better things can be said of any human being. Not only good temper, but a little more earnestness of aim, a little more delicacy of feeling, and greater warmth of affection distinguished her from her sisters. Aunt Dorothy took her home to her large heart and believed in her, and Laura was, half-unconsciously, already the better from this sojourning of their aunt among them.

She came into the room soon after her sisters' departure, and was asked the same questions given before.

"It was an old Mr. Picardy, who lives a few miles off, and had not been in the town for ages. He has driven in an open carriage up Friar's Hill."

"Then he must return this way?" said Aunt Dorothy.

"Yes, I suppose so."

Humming a tune, Laura went on rummaging a distant table-drawer for something that she wanted—things *do* mislay themselves in a thoroughly untidy house.

"Laura," said her aunt, "come here, my dear. I used to know this Mr. Picardy, formerly, and should much like to see him passing back. Do you think, without saying anything to anyone, you could manage to wheel me in my chair into the drawing-room?"

It was on the tip of Laura's tongue to raise objections. Aunt Dorothy kept entirely in her own rooms, and it would be quite an innovation to establish her in the drawing-room. But she just looked at her aunt's face and saw there so much eagerness and wistfulness that something stirred her heart.

She was almost surprised at herself for the alacrity with which she said:

"Certainly, Aunty. Let us try."

"The drawing-room door is of course wider than this," said Aunt Dorothy, "so we need take no measurements. Go, my dear, and clear away the mats in the way, and see that there is room made in the best window for seeing from, and close the folding doors. Be quick, or somebody will come."

Even in old age, Aunt Dorothy's clear brain could foresee difficulties and provide against them, so that her niece had nothing to do but obey her orders. There is a certain pleasure in following distinct directions, even if given in rather a peremptory way—as these were. Aunt Dorothy did not "shilly-shally" to the end: she was no "limp" person, even yet, when anything was to be done, and these are always the best captains in war or out of it.

With a look of strange excitement on her face, she waited Laura's return. Almost in a dream she heard her niece's voice saying, "Now, the coast is clear," and answered she was ready, with a singular feeling of talking in her sleep.

Carefully through the first door, carefully through the second, with a little difficulty about the turn, was the chair propelled. Easily then, along the smooth carpet to the window, underneath which the carriage, of necessity, must pass.

"Thank you, dear child. He was a very dear friend in times gone by. Now leave me," said Aunt Dorothy. "If anyone comes they must be shown to the inner room. I wish to be alone."

And Laura went away with a suspicion of the truth that made her smile a little half-sadly, then sigh, and sighing, think: "We shall all be old some day."

Meanwhile Aunt Dorothy looked out of her window, which faced one of the principal hotels and commanded a long stretch of street, winding up towards Friar's Hill. No carriage was in sight. It was the other window of the room that had the sea-view, but to the right of the houses a pretty piece of country was seen, where "heaths, starred with broom" mingled their gold with the sunset rays that poured on them from the opposite horizon towards which the sun was declining.

Aunt Dorothy did not see it just then. She leaned back in her wheel-chair, and covered her eyes with her hands. A half-smile—but it was a very sad one; much sadder than any tears could have been—was on her lips, and she said in an undertone:

"'I am again for Cydnus, to meet Mark Antony!'"

Then came silence.—She was not an old woman any longer. Oh

no! It was all a mistake that she was crippled and helpless, that life and its abundant opportunities had drifted into the past, and she was only a great-aunt without any nearer ties to bind her. Young, strong and straight—alas what words are those to whom the realities are gone by for ever!—but straight, and strong and young she stood, once more, in fancy.

Was she twenty-three, or twenty-four, or twenty-five?—No matter; now one, and now the other. She was Dorothy Fielding, with life stretching out before her, fair, as if glistening with the sheen of early morning, and breathing promises to her that surely nothing could belie. Within her stirred

> "Impatient wishes that besieged the sky,
> Nor disbelief of any miracle, save that life's longings and its hopes could die."

She was Dorothy Fielding, full of love, hope, and a thousand fulfilments that half unrecognised came lavishing their joy about her path. The turf sprang under her tread, but her feet sprang quicker. The very best of life, the very fairest of its hours were hers.

And who was that beside her, whose look thrilled hers with that first, desperately-sweet, never-to-be-forgotten shock of love's desire? Who was it lingered with her on matchless eves of June, when roses bloomed around, surely sending some intoxication into the air? Who was it jested those immortal jests, or holding joy one moment at arm's length with the very caprice of happiness, followed after it the keener when the graver time was spent?

Ernest Picardy, always—Ernest Picardy. There had been others, many others, who had loved her smiles. What mattered any one of them? There can be but one Jove on an Olympus, and that one was Ernest Picardy.

Since time began, all love-making and all lovers had lacked somewhat until now. And oh, never again to the voice of love let any heart throb so wildly, so joyously, so regardless of imagined doom! Until now, nobody had gauged it all quite thoroughly. The delightful peril of risking a life's happiness against half-an-hour's caprice, was surely until now an untried adventure. And the morning and the evening, the sunshine, and the rain, the very birds and breezes moved to one refrain:

> "There's nothing half so sweet in life,
> As Love's young dream."

And years went on, until the bond grew firmer, and Ernest Picardy, handsome, oh, so handsome, young and gallant, ruled over love's kingdom, and should rule for ever and for ever.

Stop there. Even in memory—even now—she shrinks from the pain of living over what came after. The foolish pride, the mistimed offence, the misadventure and misery of it all, when she called wildly on heaven to help her; when she clung desperately to the hope that

blessed chance or strange adventure might come in friendly aid; when the fond belief still lingered that some kind heart, ere hers was broken quite, would take home her sorrows and come to her rescue. *That*, and *that*, and *that*—such little things—might have been done and all saved; and no one did them, and the critical time went by, and the world went circling on, and mad cries of resistance and despair went up to heaven, and still there was no answer.

Let it all be forgotten now. A long life-time lay between that time and this. If the edge of the weapon still be keen, let it lie in the sheath. It is in the happy time, the magical time she lives now, while she waits to look upon the lover from whom she parted half-a-century ago.

She saw the carriage coming from afar. Two men were in it, one of middle-age, with but slightly-grizzled hair; the other old with rime of many winters on his scanty locks. She knew him at once—the lover of her youth. She would have known him anywhere. But oh! the change. Yet the features were handsome still, and a calm dignity was on them, that looked like an habitual expression. Age, extreme old age, was there, but in no repellant form. Only the eyes that had sought her own, and wrecked her peace of mind so sorely, would never look again on maiden, sky, or meadow. Their lids were drooped so as completely to conceal them: for during many years he had been stone-blind.

He sat with his face slightly upturned, as is the manner with blind people, his hands resting on the head of his staff, and as she looked down on him, so fully visible to her as he was, he turned in conversation to his companion and smiled.

Do not the old colours of the regiment, riddled with shot, battered and stained out of all their early beauty, bring to us a sigh of loving tribute to the glories so present to the spirit, so little discernible otherwise now?

The tears rained from the old woman's eyes as she looked, so changed and yet with such an ineradicable likeness to the days of youth was that smile of her former lover.

The carriage stopped. The younger gentleman dismounted with some papers, with which he disappeared for a few minutes into the hotel. The old man, gay, active, handsome Ernest Picardy that once had been, sat still, patiently and calmly, as one who knew well how to wait. And who knows that his heart did not respond with some deep-seated sensation of peace and fulfilled desire to the fervent blessing breathed on him from above, by the woman watching so near—the woman he had loved so passionately long ago? Face to face they had met at last, although only one was conscious of that meeting, and her soul cried out to his, full of old love and new—yes, love even *now*, freshly-born of tender ruth and woman's undying faithfulness.

His friend rejoined him, and the carriage drove on. It was "adieu pour jamais" between them now. But when the last sight of him was lost, she covered her face with her trembling hands and murmured forth:

"Thank God! Ah, so much, much better than the meeting I had hoped for and so often planned. What Heaven gives comes always mystical with satisfaction. What could we have done if we had spoken of it all, but mingle our tears and pierce each other's soul once more with unavailing regrets? Better for us both to be spared it. But oh! my love, my love! true to me, I know and feel it; only parted by our own mad pride and folly! We are calm enough now! We have both grown old, very old, my dear; but it has been together, although apart. If your brow had been smooth as I remember it, and your locks raven as when I saw them last, I could not have claimed you for my own as I do now. We should have parted company *then;* but *now* we are one—we were young together, we are old together, and the tie of mutual age has a sacredness in it which nothing can disturb. And then, when this last, brief portion of our life is over, we shall meet at last, my love, without a tear, young, and perfected, and blest for ever in the kingdom of God."

Again her tears streamed forth. Excitement and weakness had shaken her self-control to its foundations; and for a few moments of rare indulgence she did not stem their flow. Only for a few moments, however, for aged eyes cannot weep long.

When Laura came back, Aunt Dorothy had returned to perfect calmness, and greeted her with a smile that had conquered sorrow.

This girl was certainly growing more and more kindly-natured from contact with her aunt. She said, quite gently now:

"Was he greatly altered, Auntie? You must have seen much change in him, I fear."

"I knew him," returned her aunt. And then, after a pause: "He was my lover for many years, and I never loved but him. Only, misfortune, chiefly of our own making, rash and foolish that we were, came between us."

"You are very white, Aunt Dorothy. Had you not better, after all this, let me bring you some wine?"

"No, my child, nothing. Leave me here alone a little while longer, for I want to rest, and may God bless you and make you truly His."

Laura looked at her aunt half-frightened at the solemnity of the words and tone; but already Aunt Dorothy had turned from her and was gazing abstractedly on the moor, where the gorse and broom caught from the sunset blood-red reflections, that rippling like waves over their surface, left shadows of deep purple in between.

When she was alone: "I have had a very happy life," said Aunt Dorothy; "although some things were denied, and the greatest joy

granted me was followed by the direst sorrow. But I buried the sorrow. It was the joy that lived and has been my companion and comfort all these long, long years; the joy of having known love fully once; the certainty that all true love holds immortality within it. Thank God that He gave me strength to take up many cares and interests and to live 'with all my might.' It has not been a useless life, and now at the end, He has given me this great wish of my heart, this crowning joy—to look even yet again upon the face of Ernest Picardy."

She had no more tears to shed, they were done with for ever, and she was very calm.

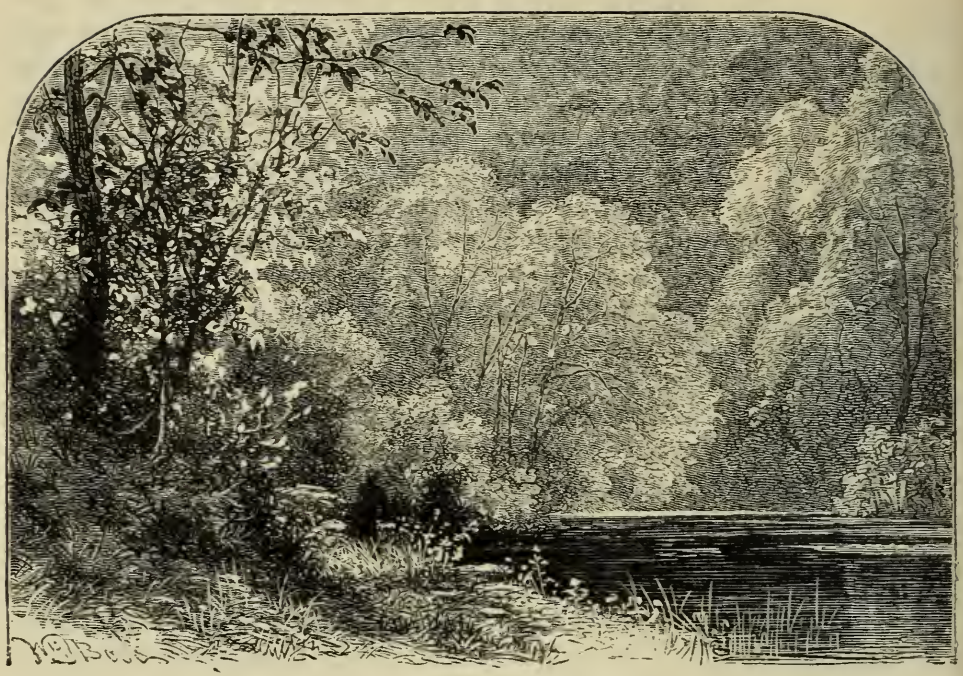
Two or three sighs she gave, but there was nothing to tell whether they sprang from sadness or from the satisfaction of a deep content.

When Laura returned she found her aunt still sitting there, but her spirit had flown. Disease of the heart had long threatened, and agitation so unwonted at her age was all that was needed to snap life's silver cord. The fulness of her cup had overflowed, and the hour in which she had looked again upon her early love had been her last.

In one heartfelt Nunc Dimittis, she had passed from age and helplessness and pain into the country where such things are not, and it is many a year now since Ernest Picardy joined her there.

When she lay in her coffin and they went to look at her and give her a last kiss, who had always spoken to them such wise and loving words, they were awed, even the most careless, at the unutterable joy and peace upon her face.

And they said that a look of her youth had come back to it, in this her final sleep.



THE LEGEND OF MYDDFAI.

THE VAN POOLS, BLACK MOUNTAINS, SOUTH WALES.

A SHEPHERD, so the legend runs, who fed
His sheep upon the mountain near the lake,
Beheld one morn, a form of beauty bred
Rise from the flood ; he, gazing, longed to make
The form his own ; his own, for love's sweet sake ;
For never had he seen a thing so fair.
Her eyes were radiant as the stars which wake
At even, yet they filled him with despair,
For how could mortal wed a spirit light as air ?

Long summer days he sought in vain the spell
With which to bind the gentle maiden's heart ;
His simple fare : sweet herbs from hill and dell :
Of these his modest wealth he offered part,
But could not force her love by any art.
One evening as he sat by thought oppressed,
She, swift as light, more quick than troutlet's dart,
Rose at his feet—hands clasped upon her breast—
" Fair Mortal I have heard ; I rise at thy request."

She spoke ; he saw the gleaming of her locks,
And heard a voice more sweet than summer wind.
" Yes, shepherd, I will wed thee, brave the shocks
Of man's poor life ; but if thou prove unkind,

Or twice should strike me, then my vow shall bind
My life no longer; hither I will turn,
And thou, in grief and loneliness, shalt find
The truth of that which men are slow to learn—
That love which lights their lives is fiery flame to burn."

So they were wed, and to the shepherd's cot
Was brought the maiden of the lonely mere;
She filled with sunshine all his humble lot,
And they were happy for a happy year.
No longer; for the stroke of doom was near.
It chanced some folk were married in the vale,
And they were bidden; but instead of cheer
When all the rest were merry, she sat pale,
And marred the marriage feast with moan and woeful wail.

Her husband, wroth to see his young wife weep,
Smote sharply on her arm as white as snow,
And asked her why she wept; she turned her deep,
Reproachful eyes on him. "Alas, I know
That nought but sorrow from this feast shall flow
To these, who loveless wed. Ah me! in vain
My maiden heart foretold my wedded woe.
Beware, lest, smitten by thy hand again,
I seek the kindly flood aglow with summer rain."

Another year went by; and lo! a grave
Was opened to receive the loveless bride,
And surging tears the mourners' cheeks did lave,
But she stood smiling at the shepherd's side.
And then again he struck her wrist, and cried,
"Shame on thee, wife, to mock when others weep!"
"I needs must joy," she said, and softly sighed:
"The dead are happy; from life's rocky steep
Love's mighty tide doth bear her children to the deep."

Then she was gone. The legend tells how sad
The shepherd left his sheep to watch the mere;
And how at times his grief grew mild, and glad
He hailed the star which tells that day is near;
But ne'er to him his love did reappear.
Yet, some aver, when dawn begins to break
On one, the longest day of all the year,
A breathing's space, the maid, for old love's sake,
Doth raise her golden locks above the glowing lake.

JOHN JERVIS BERESFORD, M.A.

A SHOWER OF DAFFODILS.

I.

IN a world where the real and the unreal travel side by side, and the visible and the invisible blend within the consciousness, who shall assert what is possible or impossible?

The strange events, which this story is to unfold, are absolutely true, and cannot be explained away.

It was seven o'clock in the evening of a certain March day when a young man of prepossessing appearance sauntered up to St. James's Hall. Madame Schumann was to play this evening, and the crowded staircase leading to the orchestra had overflowed into Piccadilly Place.

The young man paced up and down restlessly. A university friend had promised to meet him at Victoria, but he had not turned up, being probably too deep in his investigation of vortices to remember so trifling an engagement as a concert.

The young fellow began to debate within himself whether he would not go back to his hotel and look over his monograph for the "Royal" and "cut" the concert; but at that moment a cab drove up, and an old lady descended, all in a flutter, followed by a slight girl dressed in a fantastic costume of some soft Indian fabric. Her dark hair hung about her shoulders in waving masses, and rested against a clear and brightly-coloured olive cheek. About her neck was an orange china-silk shawl, its deep fringe entangled in her hair. She carried a light flower-basket filled with daffodils. In her haste to leave the cab she missed the step, and would have fallen had not the young man we have noticed sprung forward and caught her. But the daffodils! They spread themselves like a golden carpet upon the pavement.

"Oh, Mrs. Hamilton," exclaimed the girl, "my poor daffodils! And after all the pains we have taken too."

Mrs. Hamilton did not reply to this lament. She was thanking the polite stranger, who was now picking up the scattered flowers and putting them into the dainty basket.

"Thanks to the March wind the pavement is dry and clean," he said, as he replaced the last flower and handed the basket to its owner.

He looked into her eyes as he did this and almost started. He had never in all his experience seen such an earnest face as this girl's. The eyes were at once bright and searching, frank and timid. He could find no word to describe them. But he only looked into them a moment, and heard her thank him, and then

the old lady spirited her away. As she passed, a sweet, subtle scent from her soft drapery saluted him. He followed the pair at a distance. They were taking orchestra tickets.

"You had better give up your project, Evelyn," he heard the old lady say. "We are so late, there will be no chance of a chair in the orchestra; we had better go to the balcony."

He was now where he could see the girl's face. Her colour deepened and her lips quivered, and the dark eyes grew momentarily brighter as she said: "Dear Mrs. Hamilton, do let us try: I may never get another chance." The appeal was answered by a kindly consent, and then the two ladies went to join the crowd of musical enthusiasts in Piccadilly Place.

There was no thought of the hotel and the monograph in the young man's mind now. He at once took an orchestra ticket, and the recommendation that he should go to the gallery, as the orchestra would be full, passed unheeded.

How it all came about he could never have told, but hesitation about points of vantage in the crowd, which led to much changing of seats, may have helped it. In any case the scientist found himself once more breathing the delicate scent of Evelyn's soft drapery. He was seated in the third row from the platform, and the lady of the daffodils was directly in front of him, talking in low, glad tones to her companion. She removed the silk shawl, and brushed the stranger who had served her with the soft fringe. Then he saw her handing the flowers to all near her with some directions he did not catch. But soon each one in the first two rows had a daffodil. Why was he not in the first or second row he thought? And then he wondered what madness possessed him to be caring about such a thing, when this science tripos at Cambridge had hitherto fully absorbed him. He had had no time to think of women's looks. But, now that he had gained his honours, his youth and his heart seemed all in a moment to have asserted themselves, to claim him as their tardy but willing slave.

During the Dvorak quartet Joachim and the rest got but little of his attention. He was studying the rapt expression of the sweet face in front; for she had turned slightly, and he could gaze on the delicate profile to his heart's content—or discontent, for would she not at the close of the concert be carried away out of his sight for ever?

Mdlle. Badia's tender rendering of one of Mozart's airs suited his mood; but he was all the time speculating about the daffodils.

That mystery was soon explained, for as the singer gave place to Madame Schumann, who appeared in her lace mantilla, and greeted her old friends with her well-known gracious smile, the daffodils descended in a golden shower at her feet. Evelyn, in throwing hers, dropped one behind, and it fell into the young man's hat, which he was holding upon his knees. With a smile, half triumphant, half sad,

he placed it in his pocket-book, side by side with notes on jelly-fishes. It was the first time that sentiment had come into close proximity with science as far as he was concerned.

The sonata Madame Schumann played was Beethoven's "Les Adieux." That speaking music had all at once a terrible significance. "Les Adieux" must be silently said by him, and then there would be "L'Absence."

But as he dreamed, the joyful tones of the "Retour" broke upon his ear, and he was sure this was a prophecy for him. There would be a "Retour"—when or how he did not try to think—but he had not seen that exquisite face for the last time.

So, when Gounod's song, "Le Printemps," was sung, and the singer had left the stage, he caught himself repeating over and over to himself:

"Vois! le soleil étincelle,
Et sa clarté qui ruisselle
Me semble encore plus belle
Dans tes beaux yeux!"

During the performance of the last piece, a Haydn quartet, he noticed the girl making a little sign of recognition to some one in the balcony. He followed the direction of her eyes, and to his amazement beheld the friend who was to have met him, smiling back at her. His heart beat wildly. He now saw a way to the "Retour."

The concert over, the ladies entered a cab and drove away, and our hero of science went towards the balcony exit, and soon encountered his friend.

"Well, Richmond, how did we manage to miss each other?" said the one who had sat in the orchestra.

"To tell the truth, Hartley, I indulged in some mulled claret after dinner, and ——"

"Surely mulled claret could not cause you to forget," broke in Hartley, laughing.

"No," replied the mathematician, "but I was turning a spoon in the glass, and there was the vortex, and I got thinking of the forces."

"Mathematics be banished!" said the science man, handing a cigar to his friend and lighting one himself. "Come along to the 'Grand' with me. I have something I want to ask you about."

"I will go as far as Trafalgar Square with you, but I won't go into the hotel to-night. I must get back to Denmark Hill."

"Well, then, Richmond, you seemed to know the ladies who sat in front of me to-night—who are they?"

"Oh," said Mr. Richmond, in a tone which implied that he had expected something much more important, "they are neighbours of ours at Denmark Hill. They have recently built a pretty little place there, and are come to live in it. They give very pleasant little dinners, at which one always meets nice people."

"Is the young lady —— "

"Oh, she is no relation; she is a Miss Raymouth, who has been brought up by the Hamiltons. There is some sort of mystery connected with her; so a friend of theirs told me. Molesworth, the artist. He seemed a good deal interested, I thought."

"I don't see why he should be," said Philip Hartley, knocking off his cigar ash with his gloved finger.

"Why should he not be?" returned the other, in a surprised tone. "He is painting her for the Academy, as—as—I forget what, but some legendary beauty. She wears a curious ring, and in that ring there is ——"

"An engagement ring?" rather sharply interrupted Hartley.

"Oh, no; quite the contrary. Molesworth says that ring would prevent her marriage."

"Nothing but a wedding-ring can keep a man from thinking of such a woman."

"Really, Hartley, if you rave like that I shall think you are in love: you who have promised yourself to science!"

"I won't disguise the fact from you that I have caught the fever which men talk of, and which I have laughed at," was the half-jesting answer. "I can't account for it, but her eyes chained me."

"I would advise you to be careful, old fellow. I should not like to see you unhappy, and there *is* something strange in the history or antecedents of that girl."

"Get me an introduction and I will take the risk," said Philip Hartley.

"I can introduce you to the house quite easily, if you really think it well. Mr. Hamilton is a martyr to gout, and I go in sometimes and join them at coffee in a friendly way, and play a game of chess with the old gentleman. But he likes whist best, and cannot often make the table up. Mrs. Hamilton does not play, and Miss Roper, who is Evelyn Raymouth's companion and late governess, is always declining it on plea of headache. When she does take a hand, she exasperates the old gentleman by constantly revoking."

"And you mean that you can introduce me to take a hand? All right, Richmond; when shall I come down?"

"Can you dine with my people to-morrow night, and we will drop in after. But stay," broke off the speaker; "I have promised to go down to St. Albans with Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Raymouth to-morrow."

"Couldn't you get me an invitation to go too?"

Mr. Richmond laughed. "You have caught the fever to some purpose, I think. Perhaps I might manage to get it you. Are you not desperately anxious to do an etching of the shrine, or something of that sort?"

"Desperately anxious," assented Philip.

"Well, it is late, but they are late people," said Mr. Richmond. "I will drop in to-night on Hamilton, in his study; I'll wire to you

at the hotel to-morrow morning. I quite think it will be all right, and if so you can meet us at St. Pancras."

They had now reached the Grand Hotel, and parted with a hearty shake hands.

And at that very time Evelyn Raymouth was seated by her dressing-room fire, more lovely than ever in her flowing white wrapper; and her lips smiled, and the firelight danced in her bonny black eyes.

She was thinking of the stranger who had gathered up her daffodils.

"He certainly was very kind and very good looking," she said, half aloud. "I wonder who he is?" And she began mechanically twisting the curious ring she still wore upon her delicate hand. It was of African workmanship, and had the twelve signs of the zodiac running round it amid a wreath of vine-leaves. As Evelyn touched this ring the contented smile left her face, and she looked down at it.

"I wonder why I *must* wear this ring? why I must always wear it? It is more like a gentleman's than a lady's. And what can be Mr. Hamilton's reason for telling me I must take off my glove in St. Albans Cathedral, and lay my hand upon the shrine, with the ring in sight, at one o'clock? I wonder if he planned to-morrow's expedition on purpose that it should be done? and I wonder if people who suffer from gout have always strange fancies? But I would do more than that to please him. I dare say there is nothing in it, but his word is law to me."

And thought fled from the ring back to the daffodils, and by easy transition to the stranger again.

II.

The pleased expression that had come to Evelyn Raymouth's face when she found that Mr. Richmond's friend, for whom he had begged an invitation, was no other than the hero of the concert episode, still lingered upon her fresh young face as the party of four stood before the fine east window of the cathedral. She looked more beautiful than yesterday. Perhaps her thoughts had something to do with it. Philip Hartley was near her, holding a little sketch-book upon his hat. Mrs. Hamilton and Mr. and Mrs. Richmond were discussing "silver-glass" and Norman arches.

Evelyn drew off her glove with a whimsical little smile and looked at the ring. Young Hartley looked at it too. He also saw the smile, and was not pleased with either. He remembered what his friend had said.

At that moment one o'clock sounded.

"Evelyn," said Mrs. Hamilton, "we must go to the shrine."

They had already seen it, but if Mrs. Hamilton wished it, of course they could go again.

This part of the cathedral was gloomy, and the gloom seemed to affect the party. They were all silent enough as Evelyn stretched out

her hand, and laid it upon the shrine. Mrs. Hamilton talked on with Richmond, apparently not noticing that the hand was there.

Philip Hartley's eyes were bent steadily on the little hand, when something—he knew not what, for there was no sound—caused him suddenly to look towards the watch chamber. There, half hidden behind a heavy curtain which covered a doorway, appeared a middle-aged man. His eyes were fixed intently on the young girl, who for her part was wondering what Mr. Hartley would think of this action of hers, and was quite unconscious of the stranger's gaze riveted upon her.

That evening they all dined together at Redcot, Mr. Hamilton's house; and after dinner Evelyn sang "Soave Imagine d'Amor" charmingly, and Mr. Hartley sang "To Anthea," and meant "To Evelyn."

Then the little afternoon tea-table, with its dainty bows of crimson ribbon, was drawn up close to Mr. Hamilton's chair, and the whist cards were laid upon it; and it would have been a most enjoyable evening, only Mr. Molesworth, the artist already alluded to, dropped in unexpectedly and spoilt it all. For after he came a sort of constraint fell upon everyone, which was strange, as he was an old friend. It may have been due to his marked coldness towards young Hartley, who was Evelyn's partner in the game at the time he entered. These young men were destined to meet each other frequently in the days that followed. But their demeanour never changed towards each other.

Philip Hartley often came up to town from Cambridge after this time; and he never came without seeing his friends at Redcot.

Miss Roper, the ex-governess, was of opinion he came too often; but then she was rather a champion of the artist, who had adroitly flattered her water-colour sketches, made when she had been travelling with the family abroad.

There came a day, however, when Miss Roper understood that Mr. Molesworth had no chance with the young lady. She also learnt that he did not wish for a chance. It came about in this way. Mrs. Hamilton and Evelyn, accompanied by Miss Roper, drove out to the Dulwich picture gallery, where Mr. Molesworth had promised to meet them, and give direction, not to say bias, to their opinions on the works of art there. It was the first fine day after a week of pouring rain.

On their way they happened to meet young Hartley. Stopping the carriage to speak to him, and hearing he had nothing to do, they persuaded him to take the vacant place in it and accompany them.

Evelyn's parasol had a pink lining, and the soft reflected colour had a charming effect, so Philip thought. It was during that drive that he resolved to test his fate without more delay. He had ample means to marry upon.

They soon wandered away, he and she, after their arrival, leaving Mr. Molesworth and his auditors, and stood together before the portrait of Mrs. Siddons as the tragic muse, making observations for themselves.

Miss Roper was observing them, however; she felt as certain that love-words were passing as if she had been close by and heard them.

Mr. Molesworth seemed to have the same idea, for he glanced away from Murillo's "Beggar Boys" and spoke sarcastically to the ex-governess. Mrs. Hamilton noticed nothing. She was studying the picture intently through her gold eye-glass.

"So he has committed himself, has he, that fellow! I don't envy him."

In the evening, Philip Hartley dined at Redcot, and after dinner he had an interview with Mr. Hamilton. That over, he left without again seeing Evelyn, at Mr. Hamilton's request.

Afterwards, Mr. Hamilton sent for her to his study. She seated herself at his feet on a low stool, and averted her head, for she was sure she knew what was to be the subject of discussion. Mr. Hamilton passed his hand over the girl's shoulder caressingly. She raised her hand and touched his. It was the hand with the ring on it.

"Evelyn," he said, in a voice checked by emotion, "Mr. Hartley has been to me. I have told him to wait a few days for his answer." Pausing for a moment he then went on. "Evelyn, my dear, the time has come when you are to know all—all that I have kept from you for your ease of heart."

Evelyn held his hand tightly. She felt a fear of what was coming, now that Philip had spoken. Of late years she had known by instinct that there was some unpleasant tale to tell.

"Is it of my father and mother you would speak to me, dear Mr. Hamilton?" she asked, faintly.

"Of one of them, Evelyn; your father. But he will tell you all himself, very shortly."

"Then my father lives!" she cried in surprise: but she did not like to ask why had she never seen him.

"He lives, and he is very ill, my dear; your mother has been long dead. His illness is sudden, as I gather, and dangerous; and he asks for you. The letter came to day while you were at Dulwich."

"Yes?" she said, for he paused.

"You must decide for yourself, Evelyn, whether you will obey his request, or not. He has neglected you for so long that perhaps you——"

"Oh, I will go to him," said the girl, as she burst into tears.

"That is right, child; Miss Roper shall attend you. She can stay at some inn there, I suppose, while you go on to the house: I will tell her. And, Evelyn, I know you will be gentle and forgiving to him. Be your own dear self, and all will be well."

III.

NEXT day the rain set in afresh as the two travellers started on their journey. Miss Roper, who was, as we have said, liable to sudden headache, which was generally accompanied by a good deal of contrariness, and who had not liked being told she was not to go with Evelyn to the house, had one of her attacks in the train soon after starting.

And when they were only half way to Marshlands, she solemnly declared herself incapable of going another mile. The train was stopping at Brewe now, and she had a sister at Brewe; they had better stay the night and go on in the morning, she pointed out.

Evelyn would not hear of it. "In the morning my poor father may be gone," she pleaded. "He will think he called his own child to his side, and she would not come."

"He has done nothing for you all his life, and has no right to you now—that is my opinion, and you had better wait." And Miss Roper got out of the train, waiting for Evelyn to follow. But she resolutely kept her seat, and before Miss Roper had time to rejoin her, the train steamed out of the station.

Some stations further on, Evelyn changed on to a branch line. A block then occurred, which delayed the train considerably. So it was quite dark when she at last stepped on to the platform of the Marshland station, which was a mere shed of a place. Someone was to meet her to drive her to the village, more than three miles distant. But to her dismay she found no one waiting, although it was so much after the time the train should have arrived. It was clear there was some mistake, possibly occasioned by that same delay. Evelyn enquired for a fly or cab.

"Cab, miss?" returned the station-master, rather sarcastically. "No cabs in these parts; and no horses, for the matter of that. They are never asked for."

"What am I to do?" said Evelyn. "The village is three miles away, I believe, and I don't know the way to it. I might lose myself, and——"

"And," echoed the station-master, with a pause for emphasis, "the floods are out. You could never reach the village to-night."

"But what can I do?" exclaimed Evelyn, feeling ready to cry with perplexity.

"You couldn't stay here," said the station-master, consolingly. "I must close the station presently."

"Only tell me the way and I will go, and risk it," said Evelyn, with all the dignity at her command considering the unpleasant novelty of the position.

The man gave her some directions in an ungracious way, for he thought the expedition one of folly, and concluded with the assurance that she would have to turn back at the first meadow.

Evelyn passed down the country road in the darkness until she

came to a solitary mill, which was her first land-mark. Near this she had been told there was a stile leading into the low meadows. She found the stile and crossed it, and was soon conscious that she was walking in water, and as she went further it seemed to be getting deeper. She almost ran in her fear, and in her longing to bear on.

"What does it matter?" she said, half aloud. "My father, who may be on his dying bed, is waiting for me."

But very soon she heard the sound of dashing water, almost as the waves of a sea. She turned about in her uncertainty, not knowing the right direction at all. It had ceased raining, and suddenly the moon shone out from amid a bank of angry clouds. It revealed a rushing torrent before her, and a waste of waters far reaching on every side, rapidly rising. Any way might lead her out of her depth. Yet to stay where she was seemed certain death. The water had even now reached to her knees.

In her terror and despair she cried aloud, and clasped her hands as if in appeal to Heaven. The moon, which had hidden itself after a brief moment, now shone out again, and by its light Evelyn saw she was no longer alone: another wayfarer was breasting the torrent with herself. A tall gentleman, and he stood by her side; and before she had recovered from her astonishment, or her wonder at how he came there, he spoke.

"Do not fear, my child," said he. "Only trust me. I will take you safely on the way you wish to go."

The moon lit up the speaker's face. Evelyn, scanning it, saw that it was a very pale but kind face. In moments of peril such as this, we throw off the restraints of reserve; and Evelyn told him who she was, and how she came to be here alone and the place of her destination, and why she was going to it.

"Keep close to me and fear nothing," he said in answer: and Evelyn thought the voice was a more singular one than she had ever heard. The moon went in again, and they were wrapt in darkness: but the fear at her heart was gone, and trust had taken its place.

A strange, weird walk it was. The swollen stream passed in safety, their way lay along stone hedge-tops, with the water on either side blown up by the fierce wind which had suddenly risen. Then another angry stream had to be crossed. It almost seemed to Evelyn as if she were going along in a dream. Her companion did not touch her, yet he piloted her onward in safety. In some places they had to leap from stone to stone, yet no false step was made. Then followed long stretches of glimmering, nearly silent water, through which they walked easily.

"How well you must know the way!" exclaimed Evelyn at last to this good friend, who had remained silent after his first remarks.

He answered by extending his arm to point forwards; and she saw the lights of the village.

"Oh, how glad I am to see them," said the girl, with a sigh of

relief. "You will come in, when we get there, and let my father thank you?" she added, warmly. "He wanted me so very much; he is ill, as I mentioned to you. I am sure he will like to thank you. But for you I should never have got here. I should most likely have died."

"You do not know your father," he coldly said.

"No," said Evelyn, wondering; for she had not told him that. She was more at ease now that they were walking in the muddy lane, and began to consider her guide.

"Do you know my father?" she at length asked.

"I do," was the reply. "Child, if you knew that he had deeply wronged you, how should you feel towards him?"

"He would still be my father," said Evelyn, softly.

"And if you knew that he had sorrowed day and night, night and day for his sin—could you forgive him? Child, could you forgive him?"

It did not seem to Evelyn strange that this man, who had already done so much for her, should be speaking to her in this way of her father. It was all part of the same bewildering dream of which this stranger's kindness had been the light.

"I forgive my father?" she at length said, simply. "I have nothing to do with forgiving. I have nothing to give *my father* but love."

Even as she spoke they came to a cottage, and she knew intuitively that it was her destination. Evelyn stepped upon the threshold, and turned to say something to her guide.

But she did not see him. To her intense astonishment she was alone. She gazed around, but he was not to be seen; he seemed to have vanished in the same mysterious manner that he had come.

It was her father's door to which he had conducted her, she felt certain of that, and she knocked softly at it. She saw a glimmer of light through a window, and waited; but no one came to answer her. At length she tried the handle of the door. It was not fastened, and she went in gently—not to a passage or hall, but to a room: half sitting-room, half bedroom. Upon a chest of drawers a lamp burned low. In the grate were the ashes of a dead fire. Upon the bed someone was lying, covered by a blue quilt; no doubt her father. No one else was in the room. Evelyn closed the door, and moved towards the bed. Why were the clothes covering him so completely? She lifted the quilt from the face, and then she uttered a startled cry: it was the face of a corpse. And, more than this—*it was the face of her strange guide.*

Recovering, as she best could, the shock, she threw herself upon the bed and stroked the dead face with her cold, trembling hands, and cried piteously to the ears that were now for ever deaf. "Father, father, I have come! Come to love you, to care for you—too late. Why did you not send for me earlier? Oh, my father!" She burst into a fit of uncontrollable weeping. Her cry brought forth an old nurse from the kitchen, who took in the situation at once.

"You be too late, miss," she said. "You be his daughter, I reckon. He died at 8 o'clock; an hour and a half agone."

"I left the station at 8 o'clock," cried Evelyn, turning from beside the bed, where she was now standing. "Oh, why did he not send before? I came as soon as I heard it; as soon as I could come."

"The illness was pretty sudden, you see; 'twas only a day or two ago that danger was thought of. And I don't see how you can have got here at all," the woman went on, with a look of perplexity. "The floods are out."

Evelyn had covered her face with her hands, weeping bitterly.

"He got restless and anxious," continued the old servant, "after the doctor, when he paid his last visit early in the evening, said the waters were out, and that nobody must attempt to cross from Marshlands Station, for if they did they'd never get here alive. Dreadful restless for an hour or two, he was," she added, glancing round at the bed. "But he went off very peaceful at the last."

And there was a peaceful look on the dead face after all, and Evelyn reverently covered it with a feeling that it was well with him.

Then Evelyn allowed the good old woman to give her dry clothes and refreshments. But she heard little of her conversation, except that the gentleman had bought the land on which this cottage stood, and was living in it while he built himself a suitable house. He had not very long come from Africa, so the woman understood.

But, seeing the girl's weariness, she prepared a bed for her; and Evelyn, utterly exhausted, slept.

The following March, Evelyn and Philip Hartley, now man and wife, wandered in the green meadows, near the sea shore of a certain fishing village. Research and pleasure had combined to bring them here. They had been married soon after Evelyn's strange adventure.

Mr. Hamilton had wished to explain what his adopted child would have learnt had she not been too late. But Mr. Hartley had begged him to tell nothing. Evelyn added her entreaties to his; and nothing was told, except that the African ring had belonged to her father, and that he had seen her by arrangement at St. Albans.

As the young couple walked, they came suddenly upon a bank of daffodils. The flowers recalled their first meeting.

"Evelyn," said her husband, tenderly, "the daffodil is like no other flower to me. As I see you, and know you are my own, I can scarcely believe my good fortune:

> "'And then my heart with pleasure fills,
> And dances with the daffodils.'"

JEANIE GWYNNE BETTANY.

M. L. GOW. J. SWAIN.

"WHY, JOCK? WHAT *DID* YOU HEAR?"

THE ARGOSY.

SEPTEMBER, 1886.

LADY VALERIA.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE HEIRESS OF ALTCAR.

WHATEVER Bank Holiday did elsewhere, it dawned down at Altcar in full August glory. The untimely summer rains had kept the fresh green tints on the foliage and filled the brooks to their rushy brims; and now the sun came shining warm on the sodden earth and down-beaten corn fields, bringing hope to the heart that the harvest might yet be saved, and the Thanksgiving Service something more than an opening for church decoration. Altcar being on the way to nowhere in particular, the train with the party from St. Fridolin's stopped pretty punctually at the signal-box, where the pointsman exhausted his last remaining faculties of wonderment at the sight of the arrivals. A considerable demand on them had already been made when two waggonettes, the great barouche and pair which Lord Altcar insisted on keeping up for Mary Liddell's sole behoof and embarrassment, the farm pony-cart, the brake from the Ingilby Arms, and Mr. Renwick in a nondescript vehicle of his own invention all drew up in waiting, and the subsequent discharge on his slip of a platform of a whole trainful, or so it seemed, of young ladies with a lesser following of men-folk, Lady Archdale, her daughter, the Vicar and Mr. de Cressy, "fairly bowled him over," as he told his wife at tea.

"There were all sorts there," as Hester had said. All sorts amongst the girls and their friends, from the smart young brewery clerk who bore himself so gallantly, to the dilapidated little widower whose betrothed, a strapping young lass, had taken him in hand for the sheer satisfaction of setting him and his dilapidated young family and business, "in the straw bonnet line," all to rights again. The girls, to a girl, were smart and tidy, some exceptionally stylish. The party naturally divided itself into several little groups; but was, after

all, so much the more manageable. Elsie, everybody's friend, was missing. Hester, doing penance, as she frequently did, for her harsh thoughts of the girl, had made a point of going to see her, but uselessly. "Gone to the sea-side" was good Mrs. Ridge's explanation of her absence the first time: and on the second, Hester was received by a respectful, dark-eyed woman, a fellow-lodger, who took her messages but could in no way enlighten her as to Elsie's doings.

Hester sent her the card of invitation and a note as well, but to neither did any answer come.

All the rest were there, brimful of excitement and curiosity. Mr. Stannard handed Lady Archdale into the Altcar carriage, with de Cressy to take care of her. "Ought I not to take some of them with me?" she murmured, graciously, entering into the spirit of the day. And he, looking round to see who would be least embarrassed or embarrassing by such honour done her, made a happy selection of "Grannie," a neat, alert, rosy-faced old lady, who stepped in briskly and rolled off in state.

Then Hester and he set to work to make a judicious distribution of the rest, which was in time felicitously accomplished with Mr. Renwick's assistance. He eventually undertook the guidance of the party to Altcar Court, while Eustace made his way there by the short cut to anticipate their arrival. It was still morning prime, and he was surprised to see a little group on the terrace evidently awaiting him: his mother, as he made out, Lord Altcar and Mary Liddell. Down the terrace steps and grassy slope of the lawn came the old lord to meet him; his white hair flying and his blue eyes beaming delightedly.

"Ha, Eustace! Got here all right? I'm glad to see you. I'm *uncommonly* glad to see you! Yes, there's your mother. She *would* come out. Mrs. Burnett found her wanting to be dressed an hour earlier to-day, and she's as bright as can be. We're all ready for your flock. Mary is in her element, and we mean to make a regular fête of it. Glad of the chance to show somebody *she* isn't the centre of everything yet!"

Eustace deferred enquiries till he had greeted his mother and answered the loving queries that shone in her eyes. She looked to Mary meaningly, and Mary obeyed the look.

"Did you know that we have Mrs. Randolf here and the baby?"

"Amy? No, I hadn't heard. I'm very glad. Aren't you all delighted?"

No one answered for an emphatic second, then Mary spoke up loyally.

"It's quite the proper place for her, of course; and baby is the sweetest little thing in the world; and with poor Major Stannard abroad she must feel terribly tried and anxious."

Lord Altcar gave a sort of grunt by way of comment, and one of the maids tripping along the terrace brought "Mrs. Stannard's

dear love and when Mr. Stannard can be spared she will be glad to see him."

"I had better go to her at once. Renwick was going to bring them round by Chesterton Woods to see the view from the mill, but they can't be very much longer now."

The great drawing-room was empty. But as he entered by the window at one end, a door at the other opened, and a small figure in a trailing white cashmere breakfast-gown appeared. Running childishly up, she flung her arms round his neck, lifted a soft little pink mouth to be kissed and then, dropping her curly flaxen head on his breast, sobbed hysterically, to his no small embarrassment.

"Oh! Eustace. My dear, dear brother. Oh! I am glad to have you! I thought you never, never were coming to me. And he trusted me to you!"

"I didn't know you wanted me, my dear," he said, drawing back from her embrace somewhat disconcerted. "No one told me you were here."

Amy manifested great determination to control her sobs by the aid of a blue-bordered and monogrammed handkerchief, glancing over it piteously now and then.

"There. I am better now"— faintly and with a tearful smile. "It was only seeing you upset me. I must learn to be brave, now that I have baby to think of"—pressing a little plump white hand on the blue satin facings that presumably covered her heart,— "but it is hard sometimes to bear things," and she sobbed anew.

"When did you come, and where is Randolf, and how is my niece?" enquired Eustace, letting her rest on his arm, but gently and firmly conducting her to a neighbouring sofa.

"Very well, poor little unconscious darling! *She* feels nothing. It all falls on me. When did we come? Last week—or was it a fortnight ago? It seems as if *years* had passed over me."

Amy clasped her hands carefully on one side of the cascade of lace down the front of her robe, and raised her great blue eyes appealingly to her brother-in-law.

"Tell me about Randolf. Has he gone back to Malta, or what?" he asked, seating himself near her and feeling, he didn't know why, uncommonly sorry for her.

"Y—y—yes, he has gone. It was his p—parting wish that I should come here, and I have obeyed him. But oh! it's dreadful, Eustace! Oh, don't forsake me! Remember *you* are all I have in the world now," and she dropped on his shoulder again in tears.

Eustace reflected that he had a good many people in the world on his hands besides Mrs. Randolf, and, expecting every moment to hear the carriage wheels on the gravel outside, performed his ministry of consolation rather brusquely.

"Of course I'll take care of you, dear, but what on earth's the matter? If you won't tell me plainly, I can't help you."

She sat up again and spoke rather sullenly. "It's not pleasant to be made to feel every hour that you're of no particular importance to anybody. I have no self-assertion in me—absolutely none—but dear baby *shall* be considered! I have her position to maintain, let them trample on me as they will!"

"Who wants to trample on you? No one here surely?" and Eustace against his will caressed the little hand that lay in his.

"Oh, I knew you'd take my part. If you had been here it would all have been so different. I feel the chill of that home-coming yet. No carriage to meet us. Only the brougham and Mary Liddell. Not even an apology. Not a creature to receive us—dear baby, I mean. Only your father hoping we hadn't had a cold journey, and asking if baby hadn't better go to the nursery at once!"

"I see. You had visions of pealing bells and bonfires blazing, and the cheers of a devoted tenantry to welcome baby to her ancestral halls?"

Amy lifted her great eyes. "Well, why not? It's always done everywhere for the heir, isn't it? I did say something to your father, and all he said was 'Wait till he comes,' as if dear baby wasn't his only grandchild."

"Amy, dear, this is dreadful nonsense. I'm sure Randolf wouldn't like to hear you speculating on the deaths of all three of us: my father, your husband and me, which must happen before baby comes to her inheritance. Now you must keep the rest of your sorrows till the day's work is over, for I hear the carriages. Won't you dry your eyes and come and see my visitors?"

Amy was on her feet directly, adjusting her neat little fringe at the glass, then with a backward glance and surreptitious kick at her train she took his arm.

"Of course, dear, whatever *I* may be feeling, it shall spoil no one's pleasure to-day. Now we will go down to the Great Hall and bid your friends welcome."

Eustace was infinitely relieved by this change of tone, and thanked her cordially as she swept beside him down the few broad steps to the entrance hall, where de Cressy was assisting Lady Archdale out of the carriage.

Very prettily and shyly did Amy step forward to receive her and Hester, at whom she cast a sharp second look and a third at Eustace, who she was relieved to find was just as interested in the arrival of "Granny." Then the first waggonette drove up with its load and Mrs. Goodliffe, who was fascinated forthwith by Amy's recognising her at once "from Randolf's description," aided possibly by a few words from Hester. Then came the second waggonette, and then the rest, till the great vaulted hall was full of figures and voices, with little childish Amy for a centre casting winning looks and smiles around as she bade them all welcome to Altcar, in her high, clear, infantine treble.

"We have made some little plans for the day's amusement, and must make the most of our time together as it is so short. We shall dine directly, but there will be time for you to see the house, if you care to do so, first. The picture galleries and the old state apartments where King Charles once slept—Mrs. Bates," introducing the stately old housekeeper—"knows them all far better than I do. Shall I put you all in her care for a short time? And you will come and rest in the drawing-room, will you not?" timidly to Lady Archdale, adding in an anxious little under-tone: "Oh, I *hope* they will be happy. I've never had anything of this sort to do before."

Lady Archdale smiled gracious encouragement on the shy, confiding little creature and followed her. Hester electing to keep with the girls.

"Amy," spoke Eustace rather sharply, "where are Miss Liddell and my father? Should you not have sent for them?"

"Dear Eustace, how do I know? In Lady Altcar's sad state we have to be so guarded"—this in explanatory parenthesis to her visitors. "As neither of them came to help me, I had to do the best I could all alone. You know I dare not bring a crowd about your mother without leave."

He strode off without reply, and found poor Mary alone with Lady Altcar, not daring to leave her post in Lord Altcar's absence, despite one or two imperative glances from her charge, wistfully listening to the sounds within.

"Where's Mrs. Burnett to-day?" he asked. "Not on duty?"

"Oh, yes, but she had to go out on an errand for Cousin Esmée, and hasn't got back."

"And my father?"

Here Lord Altcar turned the corner of the house, hot and breathless. "Very sorry, my dear, but I had totally forgotten to take the readings of the thermometers this morning. Observations are worth nothing if they are not regular and accurate. What? Has your party come, and you out of the way? What a shame! Why don't you bring everyone out here, Eustace?"

His voice penetrated to the drawing-room, and was answered by the appearance of the two ladies followed by the two clergymen. Amy dutifully presented the strangers to her mother-in-law and then shrank away into a position of conspicuous loneliness, while Mary sped away joyously to join the party of inspection.

"I like him," Amy thought, as she noticed de Cressy's glance of discreetly-veiled admiration stray towards her forlorn little blue and white figure. "I feel as if I could talk to him and he would understand me, better even than Eustace. I feel as if I *must* talk to a clergyman in my state of mind." And she sighed and thought of Randolf, and how detestable life was without a devoted slave at one's beck and call. There was a real genuine tear of self-pity shining in each blue eye when she lifted them to the curate, to whose soft

heart her piteous little smile went straight and true. He drew near to her at once, and, in the fashion of his country, had contrived to express the tenderest interest and unlimited sympathy in the course of five minutes' conversation before the sound of the gong announced luncheon.

Mary Liddell was bringing back the first division of her party as the others re-entered. She had learnt everyone's name with marvellous speed, and had taken Hester to her heart of hearts. The girls had looked at pictures, and listened to legends, and refreshed their toilettes, and were now keen for the next item of the programme, but here a slight change had to be made. Mary was to have played hostess at the long table in the great dining-room, Lady Altcar not being allowed to risk the excitement of so large a gathering, but this arrangement Mrs. Randolf scattered airily to the winds.

"Of course *I* shall take dear Lady Altcar's place. We must not all desert our guests. I am sure Mr. de Cressy will come and support me."

"But then—I must stay with Cousin Esmée," said poor Mary, dismally. "It won't do to let her be the only lady, as Lady Archdale is to have luncheon with her. Somebody else must be there, and you promised yesterday ——"

"My dear girl, *you* can do as you please. It's quite clear where *my* duty lies," and, escorted by de Cressy, she made her stately entry into the room where by this time all the rest had assembled.

Eustace from the foot of the table watched her with quiet amusement as she presided, distributing her gracious, condescending little speeches broadcast, and enjoying to the full the subdued whispers of admiring criticism that she knew her pretty smiles and dainty laces and picturesque gown were exciting. He was glad that she should be enjoying herself, but wished he hadn't seen poor Mary's downcast look when sent back to her duties. He must see that it was made up to her later; and meanwhile the feast was going merrily, and Mrs. Bates and Mrs. Goodliffe were deep in interchange of confidences, with the Vicar and the Major for heroes; and the good things went round —the good things of a repast never equalled in the most fashionable novel that anyone had ever read—with gold plate, and hot-house fruit and flowers, and ices and marvels of confectionery; and with the dessert came the crowning moment of Amy's life at Altcar.

There was a moment of expectation, no one knew exactly for what. Mr. Renwick thought "Grace," and looked at Eustace for instructions. The brewery clerk wondered if there was going to be any speaking, and if so, whether it wouldn't fall to him to propose "the ladies," but, on a sign from Amy, the door was flung widely open, the footman announced sonorously, "Miss Esmée Stannard," and there entered majestically a procession of three.

First, a little heap of fine linen and rich lace over shimmering satin, borne aloft in the arms of, Secondly, a dignified nurse, rustling

in black silk and clanking with jet. Lastly, a subordinate carrying a load of spare fleecy wraps.

The thrill that the apparition of a baby always seems to excite amongst womankind of every station of life ran through the feminine portion of the assemblage, and even the less impressionable masculine element was stirred with interest when the pretty childish mother rose, and, taking the other infant in her arms, turned to the company and said, with the dignity of a Queen Regent displaying an infant monarch to the populace: "I felt I could not let you go without seeing my daughter; the only representative of the line of Altcar in this generation."

Without enquiring into the precise significance of this description, it sounded sufficiently impressive to warrant a burst of general enthusiasm. De Cressy, full of his nation's chivalry, sprang to his feet, and with a "Moriamur-pro-Rege-nostro-Maria-Theresa" air raised, not his sword, but his glass on high, and gave "Miss Esmée Stannard's health, with three times three!" received with tumultuous acclaim. Then the Queen-mother made her stately progress round the room with the royal infant, allowing each in turn a look, a touch of the baby majesty's soft hand, or whatever other token of devotion and loyalty suggested itself; in the midst of which a door at the other end of the room opened, and Lord Altcar, Mary and Lady Archdale appeared, attracted by the burst of clamour.

"Hullo! what's this? Handing the last entrée round?" asked Lord Altcar, not altogether inaudibly.

Amy cast him a glance of wounded feeling in return for the cruel jest. "This is not a house for children," she murmured, nestling up to Lady Archdale. "I keep my poor little daughter as much out of sight as possible, and steal away when I can to the nursery for an hour's play with her."

Lady Archdale and all the rest within hearing looked touched and sympathetic, while the nurse pursed up her lips dubiously and received the baby with the elegance imposed by a stiff, tight waist and two delicately ruffled wrists; and then the procession departed with the same state with which it entered.

"Almost as good as the bonfires and shouting retainers," Eustace could not help whispering as Amy passed him, whereon she fluttered back to her seat by de Cressy like a wounded dove.

Lord Altcar meanwhile was addressing his guests and explaining the programme for the rest of the day. Boats were in readiness to convey those who didn't prefer driving to the point nearest to the scene of the Foresters' Fête in Lord Ingilby's park; after exhausting which entertainment a ramble through the woods would bring the party to the castle ruins, where a gipsy tea was to be disposed of. There was to be a miscellaneous entertainment at the school-room later on, after which fireworks, a torch-light procession, and supper were to conclude the day's amusement.

Even the baby's reception was eclipsed by the burst of applause which followed this announcement. Mr. Renwick almost forgot grace entirely, before, with one accord, the assemblage rose to prepare for an immediate start a-pleasuring.

"You are making a magnificent entertainment of it," said Eustace to his father as they lingered in the hall; "someone has taken some trouble to get all this up."

"It's our good little Mary here. I haven't seen her so keen about anything before. It has been a real comfort to me to find out something I could do to give her pleasure. After all it's not much. Lord Ingilby is a Forester, or a Druid, or both; at any rate he always throws his grounds open on these occasions and gives a sort of entertainment to his tenants. It was only to join forces with him this year. Hullo, Mary! What are you doing there? Where's your bonnet?"

"I'm not going out," answered Mary with a dim little smile, proceeding on her way to Lady Altcar's rooms.

"Not going with them? Then who is?" barring her passage—"*you're* not going in there, anyway. Mrs. Burnett has got back, and Esmée doesn't want to set eyes on you again till bed-time."

"But—but Lady Archdale is not going out. Someone ought to stay with her," objected Mary, still downcast.

"Where's Mrs. Randolf? Didn't she say nothing should induce her to go to the Fête? Why can't *she* stop and entertain her?"

"But she *is* going. She is putting on her walking dress ——"

"Are you talking of my mother?" asked Hester, tripping up. "She is disposed of for the afternoon. She is to be driven over to see her old school-fellow, Lady Ingilby, and we are to be trusted to chaperon ourselves for the rest of the day."

"There! you hear. Now be off, and don't keep everybody waiting." And off sped Mary, her sedate little feet almost dancing in the joy of her deliverance. She was in plenty of time after all, and was ready before Mrs. Randolf.

It was not the work of a minute to assume the coquettish boating costume and sailor hat that eventually delighted the eyes of Amy's admirers. The rest had dispersed to make the tour of garden, greenhouse, or Home Farm as various fancies led, and when she reappeared only de Cressy was visible, in dutiful attendance on her pleasure.

"All gone but you?" she said, with a little plaintive smile. "Why did *you* wait for me?"

"No. They haven't started yet. Is *this* the way?"—for Amy was crossing the lawn in a different direction to the broad path leading down to the water's edge, where at the landing-place was moored a whole flotilla of different sized craft: from the great gaily-decked barge with a band on board, whose powerful horse was lazily cropping the grass beside the tow-path, through various styles of tub, down to the Rector's canoe.

"Ah! I forgot you would rather be with the others. I cannot

bear to be a kill-joy, and yet there are times when I feel as if their noisy mirth would madden me. Listen!" and she turned and laid a tiny hand on de Cressy's arm. They had gained the shelter of a little thicket of flowering shrubs within sound of the ripple and wash of the river. From the landing-place came voices laughing, calling, joking, in all the fun and excitement of embarkation. The band on the barge began to bray out cheerfully an air from "Patience," there was an irregular splashing of oars, and an occasional shriek from some nervous passenger.

"Can you blame me for having no heart for it all?" Amy demanded, with reproach in her blue eyes. De Cressy felt as great a brute as if he had done any such thing, and eagerly suggested a compromise, to let the others start and follow them leisurely at a long interval, thereby reducing the strain on Amy's feelings to a minimum.

Slowly drifting down the stream in the wake of the distant music, under the green arching branches, stopping to gather handsful of wild flowers, or sweeping out again into the sunshine over golden sand and shallow, misgivings did now and again arise in the Curate's mind that listening to Amy's sorrows, told over a lapful of forget-me-nots, with her eyes as blue looking into his for sympathy, was not precisely the help he was expected to give that day; but he comforted himself with the reflection that the others had Hester and the Vicar.

"To the light-hearted—the light-hearted. Let those who have known the sadness of life minister to each other's griefs," and he turned to the forget-me-not eyes with new sympathy.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A CALL FOR HELP.

It was in no holiday spirit that Hester had begun that day. A weight lay like lead at her heart; a weight that would have dragged her back from any pleasure-seeking of her own; that urged her to rash and unreasoning efforts to rid herself of its burden. To wild visions of a personal interview with Mr. Meynell; of appealing to Daddy to use his influence—she did not quite know to what end; of going herself to Shorncliffe to make enquiries. She could not sit with her hands folded while days were flying and detectives were blundering, and Edric's own people writing anxious appeals and offering increased rewards unavailingly, and Sir John driving her mad by ominous shakes of the head and references to "that unlucky lad, Sanderson." "Oh, to be a man and a brother officer for one brief day!"

"You'd be at Portsmouth, then, and no better off that I can see," was Master Jock's comment.

Hester was pressing on with his likeness at every available hour, partly moved by gratitude to her mother for acting so handsomely in

the Bank Holiday difficulty, partly by the consideration that the last remnants of the young gentleman's infantile loveliness were fast disappearing. They had early morning sittings and pic-nic breakfasts together in the studio, before the day got hot or Jock cantankerous. They shortened the long, light, sleepless nights for Hester and were a source of huge delight to her model.

Jock and Fraulein were going off on some private expedition of their own on that special Monday. "You'll come to me all the same at six to-morrow," Hester begged him.

"All right, but you must have sausages. No? Eggs then, and me to boil them."

Hester agreed, with a further promise of marmalade.

"And a story. A good one. I'll tell you what. I'll have all about Mr. Poynter."

"Mr. Poynter! Why? What do you know about him?"

"Lots. You bet. I know what Fraulein and Mr. de Cressy were saying last night in the gardens, when she thought I'd gone in to bed."

"Don't say 'you bet,' and tell me directly." But Jock only crowed like a cock.

Next morning, when he had lighted the little gas-stove, boiled two eggs, one hard and one soft, by the cook's egg-boiler, opened a fresh pot of marmalade and made a telephone of the bladder, he repeated his demand, and listened with a queer knowing air to his sister's version of the story that was never done telling itself over and over again in her poor little tormented brain.

"Is that all? Didn't they find blood anywhere? Hadn't he a mortal enemy? Do you think he's in disguise?—No? I know he's dead though."

"Why, Jock? What *did* you hear?"

"You ask Mr. de Cressy. I'm to keep my mouth quiet—you've just said so." Nor could threats or entreaties extract more. She had at first been feverishly anxious for a chance of questioning the Curate, but Fate and the Hon. Mrs. Randolf were too many for her that afternoon; and she suffered the cares of the expedition to absorb her as no personal ones could have done. To be always at hand for everybody's reference in everybody's emergency was the smallest part of her self-imposed duty, and her first quiet moment was when she found herself with some of the youngest and wildest girls in a boat, on the watch to prevent their upsetting themselves or it in their wild ecstasies at the sight of the flowing water, the great bulrushes nodding over their heads, the tufts of scented meadow-sweet and purple loose-strife. Snatches of talk from the two girls in the bows floated to her over the head and shoulders of the boatman in the middle.

"Believe it or not, as you like, Nelly Parsons—I saw her with my own eyes."

"Elsie Paramount! In a carriage! With a lace sunshade! I like that!"

"I'll just tell you how it was"—here Hester lost the sense—"like any Duchess; only she paid ready money. I wasn't serving, so I went and gave a look"—"open carriage and pair, and in the corner Elsie Paramount as plain as I see you—she kept her sunshade down, you know"—"only her old shabby black straw hat on"—"Addie Ridge says she hasn't been home for a day or two."

Hester began to feel languidly curious, and would have asked for more particulars, when the boatman stopped pulling. "Someone hailing us, miss. Can you hear?"

Hester heard an eldritch screech from the bank above, and perceived a small rook-boy making vigorous signs as he burst through a low fence and shrieked some words which were drowned by the sound of the band in the barge which was following them.

"He wants Mr. Stannard," said Hester. "He is in one of the first boats. He started long before us."

The boatman shouted to the boat in advance to "Pass it on!" and after some little time, for they had been coming fast down with the stream, Eustace met them returning, having disposed of his boat-load. They had shot out from between the high banks to the lower level of the water-meadows, and between the rows of mop-headed poplars could see the fields beyond, across which a horseman was rapidly approaching, waving something yellow.

"It's my father!" Eustace called to Hester in some alarm. "What can be the matter?"

Lord Altcar reined in his smoking horse, patting its neck.

"A brisk ten minutes that, old boy! I believe I'm hotter than you, though!"

Eustace scrambled to shore through the sedges and took the telegram.

"It came a quarter of an hour ago. Just as Brickbat came round, as luck would have it. In another five minutes I should have been off. I knew if I could catch you here there would be a mile of road saved, besides the chance of missing you altogether once you got into the park. What's it all about?" tossing a shilling to the rook-boy, who grinned, ducked and disappeared.

Lord Altcar, in his days of Parliamentary work, had had a private wire laid to the Court; and for the convenience of the neighbourhood, which was not large enough to have an office of its own, still kept it up, though not without many a grumble at the useless expense.

"Who's Meynell, and what does he want you for?" Eustace was asking himself the same question, wondering.

It was addressed to him from the nearest telegraph office to St. Fridolin's, and ran—

"Come to me at once. I am in great trouble. The worst has happened. I shall await your reply here."

"You see he has been to St. Fridolin's in search of me. I ought to go to him at once, but when is there a train?"

"Not till late from Altcar, but one stops at Ingildyke—the station just beyond the Park. You had better take Brickbat, that'll give you plenty of time; but can you desert your flock in this way?"

"De Cressy will—" the Vicar began, but stopped with a flush of annoyance; Lionel and his fair freight were nowhere visible. Only the great barge came slowly trailing along, stopping at a shout from Eustace.

In it was Mr. Renwick, and in him was comfort to be found. He undertook at once the charge of the rest of the day's entertainment, and, moreover, promised to escort the party up to town, spending the night at St. Fridolin's.

"As you are going back to the Court, will you telegraph my reply for me?" Eustace asked his father, pencilling on a card as he spoke. "Here it is, 'Coming back at once. Train arrives—' when?"

"It's a slow one. You'll not get in before seven."

"There it is, then. Will you give my love to my mother and explain the case?"

"But what am I to explain? What does the man want with you?"

"That I don't know. It's his wanting me at all that is the alarming thing. Do you know anything of the family?"

"No, except by name. Stop. Don't hurry," as his son was about to mount. "You'll only have to wait at Ingildyke. Tell me, who is that most charming girl?"

"Which one? Do you mean Miss Archdale."

"So she is not your lost pearl, eh?" said Lord Altcar in a lowered voice, replying to Eustace's tone rather than to his words. "I'm uncommonly sorry to hear it. She is a girl after my own heart. I mean to join the party presently just to make friends with her. There's a look in her face that shouldn't be there. As for yourself, Eustace—"

But Eustace swung himself into the saddle and Brickbat gave an impatient little dance, cutting short his words. He gave more than one sharp, scrutinising side-way glance at his son's face as he walked beside him to the corner of the field where a gate had to be opened.

"Come down again soon. I would have run up to town before this, only I didn't like leaving your mother and Mary to the mercy of that little hussy, Mrs. Randolf. Eustace!" in a sudden explosion of feeling. "Can you stand the thought of that minx as mistress here? I swear I'll live to a hundred rather than give her the chance! If I thought I couldn't, I'd set to work to day and construct a will that should throw the property into Chancery for generations to come."

Eustace laughed as he turned Brickbat's head in the direction of Ingildyke and listened to some last shouted directions about leaving him in the Stationmaster's care to await the groom's arrival, but the laugh was a bitter one. His father's words had touched him more deeply than he cared to show. The lost Pearl! Ah me! Was the old wound never to heal? Must he go till the day of his death

wincing at the random touch of a careless finger? He had always told himself that it was a pitiful thing for a man to let his life be spoilt by a woman. There was a time for love-sickness in every man's life he had supposed, but the attack would pass, and it must be a poor constitution that it could permanently enfeeble. He laughed again more bitterly as he ran over all his old cut-and-dry axioms. His scheme of life had been so perfect. It had been a deliberate attempt to arrive at his own actual value that had taken him to St. Fridolin's, and it was reserved for him there to learn the full extent of his weakness and his strength. There she had come smiling by and witched the heart out of him with a bright glance and a few soft words, and at first he had all but hated her for it. And there, one day, he knew not how, there had come to him a knowledge—bitter-sweet, poignant, exquisite—that he held in his hand the destinies of two, not one alone as he had fancied. He had done his utmost gently to unlink and dissever the thread of his life from hers, and now that he had succeeded was he to waste his later days in bewailing his success? Was he not strong enough to set before himself other hopes and aims? Was there no other woman in the world in whose love, if he might win it, rest and joy might yet be found? He asked himself the question indignantly, and something answered for him "No! A thousand times no!"

He thought of his father's words and of Hester, then put the thought away with a quick repulsion, as if he were offering her some indignity. Not Hester, nor another, was for him while his life should endure. He saw his future barren and chill but clear before him, and now let the dead past bury its dead. After which conclusion he settled himself back in the carriage and thought over every look and word of Mrs. Damien's from the first moment he had beheld her to the last.

The train took its leisurely way back to town, and the smoke of London had gathered round him before his thoughts returned to the cause of his journey, and he began to wonder at Mr. Meynell's summons. He had not arrived at any conclusion by the time the train entered the station, and on the platform he caught a glimpse of a face he could hardly believe to be Oliver Meynell's—so white and ghastly was it—peering anxiously into each carriage as it drew up.

"You've come," he said, with a gasp of relief, as Eustace got out. "I thought you would, though I could explain nothing in my message. The carriage is here. Will you come home with me?"

Seen in the gloom of the carriage his face looked whiter and more scared than at first. He cowered into a corner and sat silent till the Vicar made some exclamation on seeing that they were driving to Seagrave Place instead of Queen's Gate.

"Do you live here now?" he asked.

"Here? No. That is, I am here at present—since Sunday. The Brants are away, and I cannot go home to Constance and the children—with this hanging over me."

He said no more till they were alone together in the great, empty, gloomy dining-room. The butler hastened to fetch lights, but his master ordered them away impatiently, and they sat in the gathering twilight.

"What did you suppose I meant by that message?" he asked, standing upright on the rug before the empty fire-place.

"I have been trying in vain to imagine. Something serious has happened. Nothing else would warrant the wording. I am at a loss to understand why you should need me."

"Because I felt I could not live through another day alone with the knowledge I have gained," broke in Meynell, in a tone so like his mother's that Eustace started. "You know the story. It comes from a fresh quarter this time, that is all. I had a visit on Saturday from Stephen Magrath."

"I don't believe it," said Eustace, sturdily. "In the first place he doesn't exist."

"He does. He says he had his own reasons for leaving America quietly, which may explain the report of his death."

"And he made some claim upon you?"

"And a good one. Stannard!"—approaching and laying a heavy hand on his arm—"that man—Stephen Magrath as he calls himself—is my elder brother."

"I don't believe it," again said the Vicar, but Meynell was silent. "What is his story?" he asked.

"His reputed mother confided his whole history to him, and gave him, by way of token, some few valuables that she had preserved—a miniature of his father, his signet-ring, watch and chain;—and with these as credentials he contrived to gain admission to my mother; I don't know how or when, but recently, within the last twelve months. She gave him a letter to be given to me after her death, acknowledging him and praying me to do the same. Poor mother! poor mother! No wonder we often thought her mind wandering. How could she live without the burden of this secret driving her raving mad?"

Eustace was always touched by the change in the dry, harsh tone that the mention of Lady Valeria caused. Devotion to her was as nearly a passion as the man had ever felt in the course of his formal, orderly, measured existence. He walked to the window, and, leaning on the frame, gazing out into the dusky street, added in a strained, low tone, "She says she could not look in my face again, knowing that I knew her story. Why, do you think, should she say that?"

"How can I tell?" said the other, almost roughly in his alarm.

"She was afraid you would be angry at finding yourself supplanted." Then impatiently, as Meynell shook his head: "Then she feared you would resent her want of confidence in you—this long concealment of anything so important to the family. Won't that account for it?"

He longed to hear Meynell's answer, while recollections of some of Lady Valeria's wild words and his own wilder imaginings flashed

across his mind, and his heart filled with a great pity and dread. But Meynell was silent.

"Tell me more about this man," after a long pause. "What is he going to do next? What are you going to do?"

"What can I do? If I could doubt him, could I doubt my mother? She writes as one convinced. She lays stress on the likeness ——" he broke off abruptly, and walked up and down the room a few times. "Magrath spoke fairly enough. No threats or big words. He of his own accord suggested waiting two days for my decision. I have been able to do nothing meanwhile." (Eustace caught himself wondering whether Mr. Magrath might not possibly have taken the fact of the two days being Sunday and Bank Holiday into consideration himself). "Nothing but wait and wait."

"After all, what do you want *me* here for?" asked Eustace, not unnaturally.

If Oliver had spoken the truth he would have answered, "To persuade me out of my reluctant belief;" but that he could not do. "I wanted to see you and tell you all this to-night, for I must have my answer ready to-morrow morning. He is to come here at ten. You will come, too? I shall need a witness."

"I am to regard Magrath's position as an established fact? You don't want any help from me in disputing the claim?" Eustace asked, only half satisfied. "What *does* he claim?"

"I do not know yet. He must go over it all again to you. I have thought it out, and each time it seems more conclusive to me," said Meynell, with an uncertain, despondent look.

"It's not quite in my line—I mean had you not better consult with your legal advisers? It seems such a very serious undertaking—bringing an elder brother into the family on his own simple assertion. I think your sister has some right to be consulted."

"Mabel? No, no! Perhaps she need never hear of it." Oliver spoke hastily, in a shaking voice. "It need not affect her in any way. Any money claims *I* can satisfy."

"You think he'll be satisfied with money, without further recognition?" Eustace was getting more and more dissatisfied himself. He longed to ring for lights and have a good look at Meynell's face. Sitting in the dark hearing these despondent, uncertain remarks in reply seemed to confuse him. "If your mind is quite made up as to the course you mean to take, and I am only wanted as a friendly witness, I can have no objection to assist you so far. I shall come at ten to-morrow, then."

"Can you not come sooner? Come to breakfast. I will send the carriage," Oliver begged eagerly. "I may have more to say to you. She trusted you, and I know I have your sympathy."

"That you have," spoke Eustace, cordially, giving the limp hand placed in his a hearty clasp. "I must confess I don't enter into your views of the situation, but I am content to be left in the dark."

"I should have thought you might have seen that I hope—I humbly strive—to take this dispensation in a right spirit," said Oliver, nervously and hastily. "I—I—a—accept it as chastisement, and bow before the rod. I may have been setting inordinate store by the things of this world, and this may be sent as a warning." Eustace dropped his hand, but he went on as if he were repeating a prepared speech, gaining confidence at the sound of his own voice. "These are not the worldling's views, but as a minister you might have been expected to enter into them. I might have counted on spiritual counsel and—prayer" (this last with a gulp as if he should have disliked it uncommonly) "as it is" (in sudden apprehension of Eustace proffering one or the other) "I will say good-bye." The limp hand had grown suddenly hot and twitched uneasily, Eustace felt, before he dropped it. "Is the man trying to take in himself or me?" he thought as he walked down the street. "Both, I verily believe. I don't know yet what made him send for me, but it strikes me forcibly that for all the good I can do him I might as well have stayed at Altcar."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

STEPHEN MAGRATH CLAIMS HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

THE few who attended the early service at St. Fridolin's next morning were much impressed by the sight of the Meynell carriage in waiting to carry off the Vicar at its conclusion. It was earlier by twenty minutes than the hour named when Eustace found himself in the house in Seagrave Place. He found the banker restlessly pacing to and fro in the dining-room, looking haggard and worn, with hollow, anxious eyes and hot, shaking hands. Eustace regarded him wonderingly. He recognised fully the gravity of the situation, which had in truth cost him a wakeful hour or two that night; but he had not believed it in Oliver Meynell's cool, languid-blooded nature to take anything deeply to heart; and here he was, advancing to meet him with the faltering step and bent head of a man made old in a night by sudden calamity.

"It is good of you to come. I am very lonely here," he said in a low, hoarse voice.

"I am glad to be of any service," said the Vicar, with the expression of friendly neutrality he had resolved to himself to maintain. "I wish you had selected a more competent adviser."

"You had my mother's confidence," said Oliver, hastily. Then with a wistful look: "I wonder how this business appears to you—as an impartial observer."

"There can be only two ways of looking at it," answered Eustace, in spite of his determination to express no opinions whatever. "This man we are expecting either is your brother or he is not. In the first case he ought to be acknowledged and received into the family—if

there is no good reason to the contrary. In the second, he is an impostor whom it is your duty to resist and expose—unless you have your own reasons for letting him off. In either case you give me to understand that he is to be regarded as a dispensation of Providence, and I am pledged to suspend all judgment."

Mr. Meynell had sunk into a great leather-covered chair beside the fireless hearth. He held the arms in each hand, and sat with his head bent down.

"That is it," he said, softly and low, without raising it. "You have guessed the truth. God help me!"

"I was dealing insincerely with you last night," he went on with an effort. "I was trying to deceive myself. I can't fight this man, and he knows it; and I can't tell you why. I admit his claim—not that I believe it; the man himself inspires me with mistrust; and yet I feel if his story were tenfold more unlikely I should do just as I am doing now. I have thought of it in the night-watches, I have tried to bring myself to send for Dr. Bardswell as a faithful minister who should deal with the matter righteously, and I cannot. What am I to do?"

"Wait. That is the one thing certain. We must see and hear this man, and judge him fairly. That is the one clear duty. After that, if any sacrifice such as you dread is demanded of you, remember that you will not be alone in making it, and your sister has a right to hear and judge for herself first. That is the plain sense of the matter."

He spoke as a worldling, and was careful to do so. He knew that was expected of him for one thing, and for another, had he taken higher grounds he would have utterly failed to afford any satisfaction to his hearer, who only brought himself to tolerate him as a man by ignoring him in the capacity of a priest, though he recognised it oddly enough in the next five minutes.

"Thank you. No, I suppose there is nothing else to be done. Now, here is breakfast," and he rose to his feet and turned his back to the opening door.

The butler entered, bearing, however, not a tray, but a massive Bible and book of Family Prayers. He was followed by the household, reduced to a scanty train in these later days, two of whom carried a small red-covered bench, in front of which they ranged themselves in due order of precedence, in waiting for Oliver to officiate.

"I can't!" he exclaimed, under his breath. "I am too ill and unstrung. But I cannot let them see it. Will you take my place? As you are a clergyman they will not think it strange." So it came to pass by one of Fate's odd vagaries that Eustace Stannard conducted family devotions in the house of the Meynells!

The breakfast that followed would have been a very nominal repast as far as Oliver was concerned had it not been from his sense of

hospitality. It was long and elaborate, and carefully served, and answered one good purpose: that of getting through the interval that lay before ten o'clock.

When it ended at last and they left the room for the library, it wanted but a few minutes of that hour.

They kept silence at first by mutual consent, till the very ticking of the clock grew oppressive. Mr. Meynell drew out his watch and compared it in silence; then walked restlessly from door to window, sitting down at last cowering and shivering as with cold.

"He is late," he said, speaking at last.

"No. It is just the hour." As Eustace answered, the clock struck and a knock sounded on the door outside.

Mr. Meynell seemed to gather himself together at the sound, rose from his chair and stood a sort of ghastly shadow of his usual important self, upright and dignified, on the hearthrug.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," the butler announced, and the new-comer entered.

A man of middle height, well dressed in the usual morning attire of an English gentleman; dark hair, slightly grizzled on the temples; with a silky black moustache and wavy small beard on the chin only; complexion tanned; a quiet, watchful eye and a flash of white teeth when he spoke or smiled.

There was something foreign about him; perhaps his figure, which was that of a corpulent Frenchman before he abandons all hope of girding himself into symmetry; perhaps his shiny pointed-toed little boots; perhaps a certain floridity of speech and gesture.

So much the Vicar noticed while the man crossed the room and extended his hand to Mr. Meynell, who, after a second's hesitation, took it; and then turned on Mr. Stannard with an enquiring look, and as one who had the right to enquire.

"My friend Mr. Stannard, of St. Fridolin's," said the banker. "He was in Lady Valeria's entire confidence, and in justice to her memory I wish him to be here."

Eustace detected a certain flash of recognition as his name was mentioned, but the stranger only bowed politely.

"Ah! Her ladyship's spiritual adviser," he murmured. "Now, will you kindly present *me* to Mr. Stannard."

Meynell winced. "I have already explained who you are. The supposed son of Lady Valeria's foster-mother claiming to be in reality my elder brother."

"That's so, and I'm prepared to prove it. That's what I am. The son of Lady Valeria by her marriage with——" He stopped abruptly, for Meynell had raised his hand suddenly as if to ward off a descending blow.

"Suppose we leave names out for the present?" he asked, with a quick glance and nod of comprehension. "It's facts we have to settle first. Names aren't wanted between friends. We'll consider the

question of the first marriage as settled. *I* don't want to dispute it. Maybe *you* do, though?"

"That marriage will never be questioned by me," spoke Oliver, firmly and defiantly.

The other drew a long breath, whether of relief or astonishment Eustace could not divine. "You know you give me points by saying so?" he asked, stroking his glossy imperial and looking at him with half contemptuous admiration. "You know I don't mind admitting, if you *had* pressed that point, I might have had some difficulty in making out my case. My respected progenitor—long ago gone over to the majority—has doubtless repented his culpable carelessness with regard to his son and heir's interests. But you, my brother, make amends for all," he continued in an outburst of admiration: "you have the sentiments of a good son and a true gentleman. I, too, hope to show that I am at one with you in all that concerns the family honour. The circumstances of my early life and training may have been against me, but I trust to prove that the sentiments innate in the heart of a gentleman exist and are paramount *here*," and he drew himself up and laid one hand on his breast with an air—theatrical, perhaps—but which seemed to come naturally to the man. "Let the marriage be admitted by you. Let me feel that you in your heart acknowledge my claim to a brother's place, and I gladly do *my* share; and for the sake of one equally dear to us both I resign from this moment name, kindred, social position, and am content to die as I have lived, plain Stephen Magrath."

Magrath's voice shook, and he stopped as if affected at the contemplation of his own magnanimity. Eustace looked at Meynell, who made no response but stood dejectedly leaning against the mantelpiece, his face shadowed by his hand.

"There are still a few formalities to be gone through before we proceed to discuss future arrangements," he observed. "You are prepared to prove your identity with the boy that Stephen Magrath and Bridget, his wife, took out with them to America?" Magrath nodded. "He was well-known to many residents in Petropolis, and was always considered to be dead and buried."

The man's face fell for an instant. "Do they really think me dead, then?" he asked. I wasn't on good terns with them when we parted. They were all jealous of me. Couldn't understand why I was always treated better than the others. Poor old Biddy. She kept the secret well."

He paused, and meditated for a moment. "If they *really* think me dead," he began, addressing Meynell, "isn't it better to leave it so? Why should we take them into our confidence? I have been taking steps to obtain evidence from Petropolis; but I will give that up, unless you require it. It would of course be so much more time gained for you," he added, with a frank smile.

"It might be advisable for you to do so," the Vicar assented gravely.

"Your story hardly fits in with that of your relations out there. Then, supposing that difficulty disposed of, and that you *are* Stephen Magrath of Petropolis, you have still to go a step farther back and prove yourself Lady Valeria's son."

"For that I have my mother's letter given to me with her own hand before her death, fully acknowledging me, and begging her son to do me justice. That would be one strong argument for a jury," he said, as if to himself, checking it on his finger. "Then my father's portrait and signet ring, his watch and chain preserved for me by my reputed mother. She felt the burden of her secret weigh heavy on her as she grew old, but she dared not have written to her foster-child even if she had known how. She could only give me the tokens and beg me to go to Europe and do the best I could for myself. I have shown them to my brother there. They would be three more pieces of evidence in my favour. Fifth—pouf!" snapping his fingers with the first approach to insolence in his tone—"I have my case clear. Why waste time going over it? The burden of disproof will rest with you."

He turned boldly on Meynell, who shrank back, helplessly.

"What do you expect in case of—in case we concede your claims?" he asked, miserably. Magrath smiled a little furtive smile of irrepressible triumph.

"Nay. That is for you to say," he answered, courteously. "Offer to me what terms seem to you just and worthy of you to offer and I shall not make difficulties."

The Vicar saw he had the game in his hands, and that interference was useless. Whatever the secret of Lady Valeria's marriage this man's knowledge of it gave him power to make his own terms.

"Do you mean that I am to give up Glenara to you?"

"No, no, that would cause public scandal. I do not desire that. Can we not make some private arrangement? I am no man of business, and am content to leave all details to you. I have not been exactly brought up to being an Irish landlord," he said, with a short laugh, "and don't covet the berth, so if you see any way to commuting my claims, I'm in. I've lived too long over there," with a jerk of his head presumably in the direction of America, "to take kindly to the old country's ways at my time of life."

"You would take money down and go away?" asked Mr. Meynell, with a gleam of hopefulness in his look. "How much?"

"What was the last valuation of the Glenara property?" demanded Magrath, promptly.

"Under sixteen thousand pounds. It has just been revalued."

"Shall we say sixteen thousand, then? I shall be strictly within my right in expecting that, I assume. Sixteen thousand!" he repeated, with a sort of lingering, admiring affection. "It is much to receive, but I also relinquish much."

"Indeed? You propose to relinquish—?"

"The distinction of being openly acknowledged as a relation would be much to me, I confess," said Magrath, with a wave of his hand. "I may have cherished my small ambitions with respect to a position in English society, to which I trust I should have been found equal. But since, for family reasons which we have agreed not to discuss, this has been deemed inadvisable, I submit. I do not even ask to see my sister Mabel. I should have liked to have seen Mabel," he repeated, regretfully drawing out one end of his silky moustache to a point, "but let that go. You offer me the £16,000 in full of all demands, with this gentleman for witness, and I accept."

"And what security do you offer that this is to be the last of your claim?" asked Eustace.

"Sir! Do you reflect that you are speaking to a man of honour?" demanded Magrath, sternly, though with a comical twinkle in his eye that seemed to express his enjoyment of his own performance.

"Perfectly. But *I* speak as a man of business, you see. There may follow demands from—if not you—your heirs or representatives some day for arrears of rent—no one knows what—unless you make us safe against it."

Magrath gave him another of those good-humoured, twinkling glances, so oddly at variance with his exalted bearing, but replied in the same tone of injured feeling: "Had you honoured me with your attention for a few moments longer, I would have explained how I propose to place in the hands of my brother forthwith every token of my identity. My mother's letters, my dead father's ring and watch, his portrait and any further possessions of his which I may be able to obtain from America. What more can I do than give him the means of destroying my identity for ever if he shall so please?"

He extended his hand, on which was a massive signet ring, a sardonyx with a peculiar setting. "It has names, dates, &c., inside," he explained. "I wear the watch and chain. I have a fancy that I should like to keep that if you did not mind. The crest and cypher should be taken off, and there is nothing else remarkable about them, you can see. Then," feeling in his breast-pocket and producing a faded blue velvet case with a cipher in gold on the back, "we need not open this; the likeness would speak strongly to anyone who had known the original, but will tell you nothing. There, behold my inheritance! A valueless one but for the knowledge in my brother's possession, and this."

He drew out a pocket-book and selected a paper, which he carefully unfolded and laid before Eustace, who recognised the writing before he read one word.

He looked at Oliver for permission, but as he still stood silent and impassive, his face half concealed by his hand, he read:—

"Oliver, my dearly loved and much wronged son, have pity on me. With the full knowledge of the love I bear you has come the full

knowledge of the wrong I have done you, for you *are* doubly wronged. Not only must I take from you your inheritance, but my love must go with it to your supplanter. I cannot help loving him—my eldest born. They took him from me at his birth, but my love endured. They told me he was dead but I felt that he lived, and the hope has kept me alive to this day. You can find out for yourself the story of my first marriage. It was known to your father before he married me —No I cannot write to you about that. Go to Mr. Stannard, of St. Fridolin's, and ask him to tell you what he knows. He did his best for me, but it was not through him that my lost one has been found again. He—your brother—will bring you this. Not till I am dead. You will forgive me more easily then. Think of my piteous story, Oliver. Think, *could* I look you in the face knowing that you knew it? He will wait, he promises me, and you will act honestly by him. I can trust you. Ask him for proofs if you will; I need none. He has his father's face and voice, and is—I solemnly declare to you—my son—my very son, whom I shall see but once more in this world. I write this in readiness to give into his hands. I write it deliberately in my full senses. Ask your sister, who shall witness my signature to this, though she is ignorant of its contents. My good, dutiful son, I grieve for you and your pain, but I die happy trusting in your love and loyalty to me. Your Mother,

VALERIA MARY MEYNELL.

(Witnessed) MABEL GERALDINE BRANT.

14 June, 1882.

Eustace read the letter aloud, slowly and thoughtfully. A low moan broke from Oliver as he ceased, and Magrath heaved a decorous sigh. "You will bear me witness that it reached you with the seal unbroken. Rather a heavy risk for an impostor to run, eh?"

Mr. Meynell turned on him wearily and impatiently. There was evidently no further fight to be expected from him.

"You shall have your money. It may take me some little time to raise such a sum; the property itself would not fetch the half if we were forced to sell now——"

"Why sell?" interrupted Magrath, eagerly. "Pay me the value by instalments. I didn't expect a cheque for the lot on the spot, though I shouldn't think you'd find any difficulty in drawing one——" "Pay me off in so many months—by Christmas if you like—and come! I'll meet you fair and square. I'll be content to deposit these valuables with a mutual friend—let us say Mr. Stannard—in the interval. He shall give me a receipt, though!" with another confidential wink at the clergyman.

"By Christmas? That is short enough time for the arrangement I must make. Shorter than Law would have demanded. I have to provide for Mabel's portion, too," Meynell said, with gloomy anxiety.

"You don't think, then, that my sister and brother-in-law would be

willing to assist you in bearing the inconvenience of this sudden call?" enquired Magrath, with a veiled purpose in the observation.

"For your own sake I recommend you not to make the experiment," was the hasty answer. "Charles would not see the urgency—He would never agree to compromise. He would demand that the whole case should be carried into Court before he would listen to a single argument in your favour!"

"Well, for my own part, I should be far from objecting to that course," Magrath observed, with a slight swagger. If he merely spoke with a sort of light, gay malignity to arouse Mr. Meynell he succeeded. Oliver turned furiously on him.

"Dare to hint it. Dare to threaten to open your vile lips in public—to make her name a scandal in men's mouths! Man! I would kill you sooner. Take my money—if it were my heart's blood it should be poured out like water in her defence—but hold your peace, at your peril! If I am sinning in this, not on me—not on you be the curse, but on him—the idle, flattering scoundrel who came into her life to blast it in its girlhood. Oh! may the burden of the woe he has caused rest on his soul to all Eternity."

Magrath nodded assent. "Bad luck to him now and for ever by all means," he murmured; then, looking at Meynell with new respect as he turned away and buried his face in his hands: "Poor devil," he ejaculated in a tone of heart-felt pity, "he takes it hard. If it were my—*being* my mother, I like him for it. He won't get out of it at her expense, you see—" in an explanatory parenthesis to Eustace—"it's a high-toned line to take that mightn't have occurred to you or me." The Vicar was too much absorbed watching his friend to disclaim. He was witnessing an unexpected revelation of Oliver Meynell's character, and was too full of intensest sympathy with the sacrifice being offered up before his eyes to attend to the other for the moment.

"Poor devil," repeated Magrath softly, and approaching Meynell laid his hand gently on his shoulder: "Cheer up, Mate!" he said, in the first tones that Eustace recognised as natural. "The game's not over at the first deal." Meynell only motioned him away with his hand, and he retreated, studying him curiously with a sincere, half-contemptuous pity; in which Eustace could detect no trace, however, of remorse or misgiving. "I suppose he *was* uncommonly fond of her. If I had guessed it would have gone with him like this ——"

"You would doubtless have kept silence?"

"How do I know?" enquired the other, with his favourite meditative action of stroking and twisting the long, fine tip of his silken moustache to a point. "Who can speak for himself in advance? Yesterday I was Stephen Magrath. To-day I am nameless. To-morrow I shall be—who?"

Here Oliver Meynell lifted his ghastly face and looked towards them. I spoke hastily and sinfully just now. I pray that my words

may not be reckoned against me; they were unworthy of a professing Christian. Such a slip as may give the enemy occasion to blaspheme."

Magrath looked horribly puzzled, but stroked his moustache in silence, making a deprecatory motion with his hand as if nothing were farther from *his* intention.

"Go now; I can trust myself no longer. Go. You shall have your rights."

"Eventually. Of that I am assured. I candidly confess I should like the handling of a note or two by way of earnest. Don't inconvenience yourself. Notes, or cheque, or gold." His eyes flamed as he watched Meynell open his writing-table drawer and take out a cheque-book. He stood looking over his shoulder till he saw the amount filled in, when his hand went up again to his mouth to conceal a smile of complacency. He caught Eustace's eyes fixed meaningly on him. He advanced to the table with a flourish, and taking up a sheet of letter-paper made a neat, workmanlike parcel of the letter, watch and chain, miniature and ring; Meynell handed him string and wax, and he secured them carefully, with an occasional glance of high content at the tempting slip of paper in the banker's hand. The work done, he turned solemnly to Eustace. "Take this. In your hands now rests the honour of the de Cressys. On the day when my brother's last obligation is discharged they are his, to deal with as he shall see fit. Till then you will hold them in trust for both of us." Eustace accepted the obligation gravely, and wrote a carefully worded receipt which he handed to Magrath, who was occupied in writing another for Meynell in a neat, clerkly hand. He made a pause at the signature, and a hot flush mounted to the banker's pale cheeks as he took the paper and quickly put it out of sight. In another minute Magrath had picked up his curly-brimmed hat, bidden a graceful adieu to both, and with a jocund step and smile departed.

"To meet again!" he said, as the door closed on him.

Meynell cast himself into a chair all spent and trembling.

"Don't leave me just yet," he pleaded.

Eustace had rung the bell, and meeting the butler at the door gave him an order.

"I don't mean to go for some time," he answered. "I have a great deal to say to you, and when you have had a glass of wine and can listen quietly you shall hear it."

"He is a scoundrel," said Eustace, presently. "No, that is too black a word—A rogue in grain. He knows that we both disbelieve him utterly, but as he has got you in a cleft stick he doesn't care even to take much trouble to play his part thoroughly. I think he anticipated a harder fight, though."

"My hands are tied," groaned Meynell. "He knows what I hoped even to conceal from you."

"The difficulty of proving your mother's first marriage? That would have been *his* affair surely," suggested Eustace, who, to tell the truth, had been much exercised by the apparent inconsistencies of the situation.

"If he could, I'd take his hand and acknowledge him before the whole world. No, it can never be done. The man he calls his father knew he was free. Knew it so well, that he dared to leave my mother without another message or sign. Dared openly, not many years after, to marry another woman, and this man knows it."

Lady Valeria had hinted as much, Eustace could not but admit; though then he had taken refuge in unbelief. Even now he determined not to be convinced, but mentally marked that point for future examination.

"How did this Magrath come by your mother's letter, do you suppose? Will you give me something safer than paper to enclose this precious parcel? What a stroke of impudent cleverness it was to make us the custodians. He knows it's safe and accessible, and prevents us making any attempt to deprive him of it." There was a small, soft leather case with a lock in Meynell's writing-table drawer. He gave it to Eustace, who locked the little parcel inside and handed the key to the banker. He was purposely avoiding discussion till the wine which he had poured out and pressed on Meynell should have done its work. He had taken one glass distastefully, then held it to be refilled. It was fine, delicate, yet generous wine, brought in their honour from the secret recesses of the famous Meynell cellar. Port of the sunny vintage days when this century was in the young twenties. Not to be lightly squandered on Lady Valeria's clerical friends, nor even the Brants. Lord Charles was a blue ribbon, and affected new-fashioned, fizzing messes, and her ladyship anything gassy and sweet that called itself champagne.

The sun and grape of Portugal did their work well this day.

"What can we do?" asked Oliver, his voice steadying as a pinker shade dawned on his pallid cheek. "Is it possible you see a gleam of hope for me? I'd give twice that any day to prove that this villain and my mother have nothing in common. Do you—can you believe that that letter is not hers?"

"Tell me, have you ever seen that ring before? Think of it and try hard to remember. A sardonyx, and a very fine one; a deep orange, flecked with brown; (Eustace had had his gem-collecting fever in his time) and the setting—this," he pencilled the outline on paper; but Meynell only shook his head. "Never that I know of."

"*I* have, I firmly believe, while by his own showing that man was still in America. Think again. Never on your mother's hand?"

"Never!" spoke Meynell, positively this time. "I know the rings she used to wear, and this was never one."

"Then she must have put it on for a special purpose the second evening I met her. I seem to see it clearly. How her rings slid

loosely on her thin fingers, and this one all but fell once. She looked at it, too, with a meaning air, and seemed about to call my attention to it, but checked herself. Yes, I could almost swear to it."

"How did he get it?"

"How did he come by that letter? I have asked you that before. There is, I think, no question of your mother having written it, but not for him—that I cannot believe."

"For whom, then?" eagerly.

"There you must help me. May she not have written it under a delusion, for some purely imaginary son? That agent had buoyed her up with hopes of meeting him again. If we could but lay hands on her!" Meynell shook his head sadly.

"No, that won't do. I know she was not herself many a time. I know from what my father told me there were peculiarities about her mania; strong delusions on some points, while on all others she was perfectly rational. But I cannot believe she would go so far as to write this with nothing definite to go upon. No, he has persuaded her into recognising him, poor soul!"

"Impossible!" Lady Valeria's wild words still ran in the Vicar's head. "Young—quite young; tall and fair like his father, with kind, bright eyes—blue eyes!" Impossible for dark, gipsy-faced Magrath to have passed for one moment as the one she was seeking. "I should like to have seen that miniature," he said, regretfully.

"It was faded almost out of recognition but could never have been like him. There was an inscription on the back with the names in full and the date," Meynell replied.

"He stole it! he forged it. The cipher on the watch was too sharply cut to have been in wearing as long as the rest of the case. If I could have only had a watchmaker's opinion on the state of the works. Meynell, you cannot let this go on. It is impossible to see this imposture flourishing before our eyes and not strike it down. It *must* be done; if only for the sake of your mother's memory. No wrong, of which she was the innocent victim, can be so great as that a vulgar adventurer like this should be permitted to make her his tool now that she is dead."

He had started up, and made a few hurried steps to and fro in the room. Meynell started up too, and stood beside him, upright and determined, his eyes alight.

"You are right! It shall *not* go on. If I had had the courage to trust you wholly from the first I might not have given way as I have done. It was the shock, so terrible and unexpected, confirming what I had been gathering with dread from my dead father and Lord Kilmoyne's letters. I had been shutting my eyes to the truth as long as I dared, and it seemed to start up in this man's person and strike me powerless. Let us only keep it all from Mabel. Brant is perhaps not so thoughtful of her as he might be, and if he fancied there was madness in her family ——"

"They need not know." Eustace stood with bent head considering. "There ought to be another chance for us. I feel it, if I can but lay hold of it."

"I wish you could stay with me," Meynell said, with a sigh. "Alone with my thoughts I begin to mistrust myself till I feel as if my mind were giving way. I must go to the city to-day, though," he ended, with a sort of satisfaction.

Eustace looked up. "That woman, Euphrosyne. What have you heard of her?"

"Nothing. The police here and in Paris have been at work, but to no purpose."

"Try them again. Offer double the reward. *She's* our chance, Meynell, if we can but lay hold of her. She is either working with this man or on her own account. If the latter, she will side with us against him. If the former, she must be bought up, frightened, worked upon till she confesses. Only let me meet her face to face for half-an-hour ——"

"You shall, if money can do it. You shall do what you please. I put myself in your hands unreservedly. You have my full authority to act as you see fit. Send for me at any hour, night or day, and I'll come. Tell me what you would have me do, and I'll carry it out to the letter." Meynell, in his excitement, seemed only anxious to commit himself beyond all possibility of retractation.

"Don't pay off Magrath a day sooner than you can help. Show no suspicion and give him as little as he will take at a time, and go home straight to Mrs. Meynell and the children. If they don't do you more good than I can, I'll never offer a word of advice again."

"I do miss them woefully," with a faint, half-conscious smile. "You must see little Val some day. She is my mother's living image. Yes, I'll go back to them."

"Have you heard any more of that poor young Poynter?" Eustace asked, as they passed into the hall, and private topics must be abandoned.

"Not a word. The police are entirely at fault. I shall withdraw the reward next week. It was all one of Brant's mare's nests from the first. I am sorry for the young fellow, but I can have no conceivable interest in finding him."

So the two parted, Meynell heartened and hopeful in his own despite, Eustace to go back to a long day of the labour in which he used to delight, but which had lost its salt and savour now for some reason. Life seemed sometimes a very dreary, ugly, unholy mystery, not worth the solving—sometimes, not always. He had a brave, trustful nature, though not a joyous one, and he had early taken to himself the saying of the wise man in its full truth: "There is in man a Higher than love of happiness. He can do without happiness, and in place thereof find blessedness."

(*To be continued.*)

DOMESDAY BOOK.

THIS year being the eight-hundredth anniversary of the completion of the "Domesday Book," it has been determined to celebrate it under the auspices of the Royal Historical Society. We are all familiar with the name of this book, though few of us have ever seen the inside or the outside of it. It may not be amiss, therefore, to collect a few facts concerning it, so that we may be in a position to take an interest in the subject which is about to call so many of the learned and scientific together.

There is the real book as it was produced eight hundred years ago, and there is a facsimile of it, which was effected, after ten years of labour, in 1770. It is the original document which forms the subject of interest to us now.

The present home of this venerable book is the Record Office, a large and handsome building standing between Chancery Lane and Fetter Lane, a hundred yards or so out of Fleet Street.

Domesday Book consists of two volumes, a greater and a lesser. The first is a large folio containing three hundred and eighty two double-columned pages, written on vellum, and deals only with thirty-one counties. The writing is small, clear, regular and exquisite; and the red and black inks which were employed are as bright as if written yesterday.

Its original binding was wood, covered with leather and ornamented with brass; this, however, had to be removed, as it was becoming worm-eaten, and would seriously have damaged the vellum had it remained. It is, fortunately, kept by the side of the book, so that those who take an interest in the art of book-binding eight hundred years ago may see and examine it for themselves.

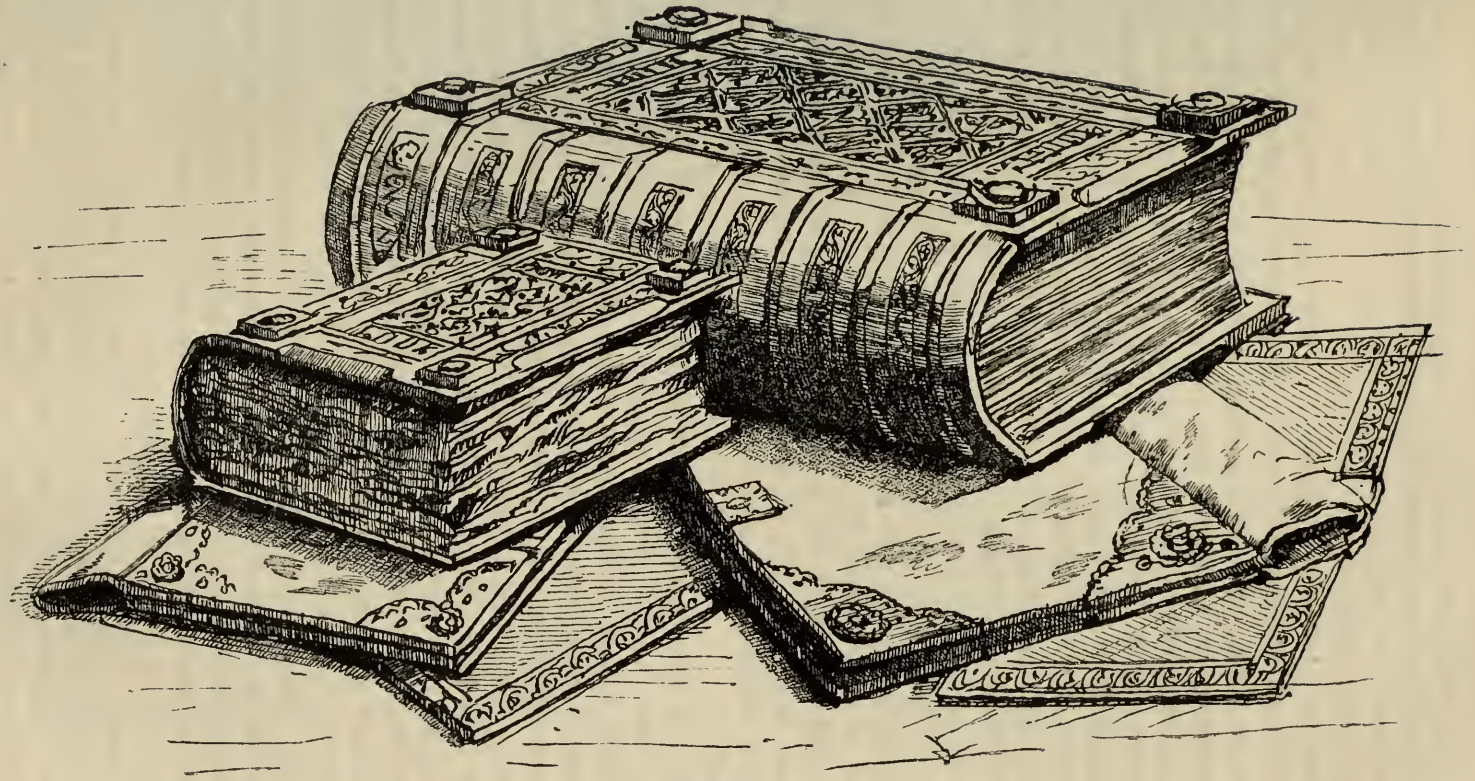
In its new binding, ornamented with silver, it turns quite a nineteenth century face to lookers-on; but you have only to open it to see, in spite of its excellent preservation, that it is no child of our time.

I have been to see it many times, but I never get rid of a certain feeling, half of awe and half of pride, that I am touching that which the hands of our forefathers wrought eight hundred years ago—hands which even now seem to have the power to force us back to the period which they have so accurately pictured.

I was there yesterday again, and I said to the Professor who stood by: "I wonder if anything we do in this year of 1886 will stand the test of eight hundred years, as this Domesday Book has done?"

"I cannot say," he replied; "and we shall not be alive to see," he drily added. And then he called to my mind the anecdote about the man who, hearing that ravens lived two hundred years, bought one to try.

The second and smaller volume, dealing with the counties of



DOMESDAY BOOK.

Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk, part of Rutland and part of Lancashire, is in quarto, written in single column and in a somewhat larger character, but equally clear and elegant. Like the larger volume it is bereft of its original binding and appears in a comparatively modern one.

This book is among records what the Koh-i-noor is among diamonds, and has been the object of incessant care from the first day of its existence until now.

It was the constant companion of our early kings, travelling with them wheresoever they went, until, in the reign of John, it was almost lost in the Wash, with several other valuable records. After this, it was thought better to keep it in a place of safety ; and we find that it was early brought to Westminster and kept, with the king's seal, in the Exchequer under three locks and keys, in charge of the auditor, the chamberlains and deputy chamberlains of the Exchequer.

In 1696 it was deposited, among other valuable records, in the Chapter ; and, as we know, is now kept in a strong glass case in a room in the Record Office.

The name by which this book is known is a startling one, and it is worth while to enquire the reason for giving it such a title.

It is supposed by some to have received it from "Domus Dei," a chamber in the cathedral at Winchester so called, in which the returns were arranged and written down, and where for a time the book was deposited. It is probable the words were pronounced as in Italian, which would give "Domus Dei" very much the sound of Domesday.

A second reason for the name may be found in the fact that "doom" and "day" (dom, bocs) are Saxon equivalents of judicium, and "their union in the composition of its title thus emphasises Domesday Book as the great judicial record of the age."

A third reason for such a name is that the authority of Domesday Book has never been permitted to be called in question; and when recourse has been had to it to determine a doubt concerning the tenure of land or other matter, there could be no appeal against its decision, any more than against a sentence pronounced at Doomsday —"Hence," says an ancient historian, "it is called 'Domesday Book.'"

Having looked at the outside and taken a peep at the inside, we will look to its origin and purpose; and in order to do this, we must go back to the year 1085—a period of leisure to William, after long years of vigilance and anxiety spent in quelling rebellion within and without.

Like many another conqueror, when the battles were over, and a period of peace and rest arrived, he wanted to take stock of his gains and see if they were sufficient to repay him for years of sorrow, disappointment and bloodshed, and if not, to make them so.

A man who could employ his leisure in thinking and working out such a scheme as the general survey of his country eight hundred

years ago was no ordinary man; and we shall the better understand this if we quote a passage concerning him from the "Saxon Chronicles," where he is described from personal observation :—

"The King William about whom we speak was a very wise man, and very powerful, more dignified and strong than any of his predecessors were. He was mild to the good man who loved God, and over all measure severe to the man who gainsaid his will. . . . He was also very dignified: so also was he a very rigid and cruel man, so that no one durst do anything against his will."

With this character, he was not likely to have allowed any obstacles to stand in the way of carrying out any purpose he had at heart. His idea was to take a survey of his kingdom in so accurate and detailed a manner that when completed he should be able to discover at a glance every hide of land, waste, and water within its borders; the value and the owners of the same, the condition, employment, wealth and consequence of every individual of the population. A council was called by William, and the result was that commissioners were sent through the length and breadth of the land to ask and get answers to the following questions :—

The name of the place.

The name of its owner in the time of Edward the Confessor, and at the time of taking the survey.

The value of the place at both periods.

The number of hydes in the manor.

The quantity of demesne land.

The number and quality of the tenants.

The extent of their holdings.

The nature of the soil.

The number of mills and fishponds.

As the reports came in rapidly to Winchester, a certain method was adopted in entering them in a book, viz. :—

1st. Entitling the estate to the owner, invariably beginning with "*Terra Regis*."

2nd. The hundred was next specified.

Then the tenant, with the place, and afterwards the description of the property.

"Not a hyde* or yard of land, not an ox, cow or hog was omitted in the Census," says an ancient historian; and Fuller, in his "Church History," concludes a sentence concerning the survey with the words, "So accurate were they in the very fractions of land." There is no doubt that the survey was made with so much exactitude and conciseness that the king not only had no difficulty

* The quantity of a hyde of land was never expressly determined. According to some authorities, it was a hundred acres, while others speak of it as ninety-six. Bede says a hyde is a piece of ground sufficient for the maintenance of a family, or as much as was sufficient to the cultivation of one plough. Bishop Kennett says hyde is derived from the Saxon *hijod*, a house or habitation, from *hijdan*, to cover.

in getting a perfect knowledge of the possessions of the Crown and the military strength of the country, but it also pointed out to him the means of increasing his revenue.

It is said that William rendered himself universal proprietor of England, and that his own annual fixed income amounted to £400,000. To understand this sum, it is necessary to remember that at that time a pound contained three times the amount of silver that it does at present, and that provisions were ten times as cheap then as now; so that, all things considered, his income could not have been less than nine or ten millions of our money. To be able to read for ourselves all that the Domesday Book could teach us, we should be obliged to study an ancient form of Norman French.

This to the majority of us would be impossible; but there are some, called Domesday Scholars, who have mastered its contents and have shown us what an inexhaustible source of interest it is to those who care for the history of their country. To no one are we more indebted than to Sir Henry Ellis, who has, in his introduction to Domesday, done so much to make it clear and understandable, and to E. A. Freeman, whose constant reference to it in his History of the Conquest has made us quite familiar with many of its details.

The picture that we get from the Domesday Book of the England of eight hundred years ago is as unlike our England of to-day as it is well possible to imagine.

Vast districts were then covered with parks and forests of many thousand acres in extent; and innumerable herd of swine were turned loose in them to feed upon the acorns and mast.

Our eastern counties, now so productive and healthy, were then dreary swamps, undrained and almost profitless.

Our Westminster Abbey and St. Margaret's stood nearly alone, backed by a thick wood, which sheltered thousands of swine.

The country seats of the upper classes were then four-roomed houses, with the staircases, as a rule, outside, and rarely possessing the luxury of either chimneys or glazed windows; and as to the labourers' cottages, they were nothing but mud hovels.

Again we find that the trades followed by our forefathers were very few and simple compared with those in our day. Of course, there were smiths, tanners and carpenters; but the "manufacturing interest" as represented in Domesday is confined to clothworkers and potters.

The women of the various households were, as we learn, so industrious and clever as to do away with the necessity of employing bakers, brewers, tailors and weavers; they were quite able to perform these tasks for their own homes and families.

It would take many pages to give all the points of interest concerning the social, political and religious condition of the people at the time that Domesday Book was written, and we would recommend all who care to learn more of the history of our forefathers as it appears in Domesday Book to study Ellis, Ewald, and Freeman on the subject.

UP ON THE MOOR.

YOU won't easily find, even in Devonshire, a prettier spot than Coombe Burleigh. The score or so of thatched, deep-porched cottages, forming the village proper, lie near the mouth of a narrow glen, down which the Burleigh brook hurries noisily along its winding way. A few farm-houses lie scattered on the steep, wooded sides of the glen, and near them bare patches of rich, red soil mark the course the plough has lately taken. At the head of the valley a grand swell of blue moorland rises boldly up against the sky, here and there lifting itself into a great granite tor. For Coombe Burleigh lies on the edge of Dartmoor; and all but *on* the moor there stands, some mile or two from the village, the big old house in which for many a generation past have dwelt the Carews of Coombe Burleigh.

One morning last shooting-season a very comfortable and pleasant little party had assembled around the loaded breakfast-table at Coombe House; for Squire Carew fairly brimmed over with hospitality and bonhommie, and his handsome, cheery wife came no whit behind in the same delightful virtues. Then there was Madge Carew, a frank and fearless girl of twenty, whose soft black eyes, raven hair, and creamy complexion told that the Squire was not far wrong in boasting of her as "pure Devonshire, born and bred." Just now she is busily ministering to the creature comfort of her brother Tom and his guest, Aleck Fairburn, a young Highland laird, whose acquaintance Tom had lately made in town, and in his father's own hospitable fashion had brought home for a week's shooting on the moor.

For some days after the arrival of the young men rain had fallen in a downright and persevering fashion, which made the Highlander feel at home in his new quarters at once; but to-day the sun shone cheerily out, and all preparations had been made for a long day's sport.

"But you must beware of the Dartmoor fogs, Mr. Fairburn," said Miss Madge, presently. "You know they come down with extraordinary suddenness; and it's no joke to be lost up on the moor in a fog, I assure you."

The young laird turned to her with a smile.

"You forget, Miss Carew, that fog is no stranger in the Highlands either, and that we have our moors as well as you. I must have profited very little by the deerstalking at home if a mist makes me suddenly forget the points of the compass."

"But all the points of the compass together won't save you from tumbling into a peat-hole full of ink-black water, or pitching, head

first, down an old quarry, when the fog is so thick you can't see a yard before you," persisted Madge.

"I think you may make yourself easy on my account, though, of course, I am honoured by your solicitude. A sportsman must be prepared for a certain amount of risk, but I have never yet failed to make my head keep my feet from such dangers as you so vividly conjure up, Miss Carew."

There was just enough pride in the young man's gay tone to check the reply which rose to Madge's lips, but not to prevent a quiet whisper to her pet brother as she stood at the hall-door to watch the start.

"Don't let Mr. Fairburn wander off alone, Tom, if you can help it. *You* know our fogs better than he does."

And good-natured, long-limbed Tom nodded ready assent as he followed the Squire and his guest down the broad old steps.

The three had done a capital morning's work, and covered many a mile of broken, undulating moorland, before they sat down to their one o'clock lunch. So, perhaps, it was no great wonder that when the good things Madge's own fair hands had carefully packed for them had been discussed with such appetite as four hours' steady tramping could give, both Tom and the Squire should throw themselves luxuriously back on the short, warm turf, and, from gazing in silence at the fleecy clouds sailing overhead, sink into one of those brief, delicious slumbers in which alone we taste the full enjoyment of sleep, while their two followers were busy disposing of the remains of the feast.

But Aleck Fairburn was one of those uncomfortably restless mortals for whom even such an indulgence holds out no temptation; so that though for a little while he kept watch over his dozing companions with a laudable attempt at patience, it needed only the sight of a large bird sailing slowly down the wind at some little distance to make the young laird spring to his feet and seize his gun.

"There goes a heron! I must have that fellow to stuff and pair with the one I got last year. I'll be back in half an hour, Mitchelmore."

The head-keeper looked up from his lunch with an aggrieved expression on his shrewd, weather-beaten old face.

"Now, look'ee here, Jan Pearce," he remarked, severely, to his subordinate, as he watched the young fellow depart at a long, swinging pace: "when us started, this blessed mornin', young Squire, he saith to me, 'Mitche'more,' saith he, 'daunt'ee go fur to lose sight o' that there young gen'leman, 'cause he'm a stranger to these 'ere parts.' But I just put it to 'ee, Jan, *be* it raysonable to ax a man o' my years to go aff a guse-gandering in the midst o' his vittles? I bain't a goin' to do it, Jan Pearce! So there!"

"Ees fay, Maister Mitche'more," assented the under-keeper, warmly. "Us wants our bit o' vittles arl so well as the quality, us

doth! And so both Squire and young Squire knowth, and takes their little rest like Christens. But they furriners be puir wheesht sort o' bodies—maze as a sheep, the half o' 'em! Lit un go, maister; he'm big enough to take care o' hizzel'; and have a bit more pasty in pace, do'ee now!"

So the "furriner" was left to pursue his prey in solitude. On, and still on, flapped that heron before him; now alighting, till he was almost tempted to risk a long shot, then slowly rising and sailing away out of sight. Nearly, but never quite. The bird might have been an evil spirit luring the pursuer to destruction, so pertinaciously did it contrive to keep alive the excitement of the chase. And Mr. Fairburn was not only a keen sportsman but an obstinate Scotchman who never knew when he was beaten. Time and distance alike faded from his thoughts in the ardour of the pursuit, until he was at length recalled to a sense of the situation by finding his further progress checked by a little river which wound its way along the bottom of a steep ravine, and, standing on the edge of the cliff, had the mortification to watch the heron flap slowly away into the blue distance. Then, with a hasty ejaculation, Aleck turned away and took out his watch.

"By Jove! nearly four o'clock, and I promised to be back in half an hour! A nice sort of fellow they'll be thinking me if they have waited there all this time. Well, I suppose there's nothing for it but to make the best speed back again. It's east for about an hour and then a bit south, I know."

No misgiving as to the correctness of this conclusion entered Mr. Fairburn's head till after nearly an hour's sharp walking. Then an uncomfortable suspicion that the great tor before him was strangely unfamiliar in aspect gradually forced its way to the front. Just at the same time the wind suddenly shifted to the west, and before the question of the tor's identity could be settled the whole horizon had vanished from the wanderer's sight, and a dense, dark fog advanced over the moor with giant strides, till it completely enveloped him in its chill embrace.

To attempt to advance in the sudden darkness seemed folly, for pitfalls abounded on every side; and even Aleck Fairburn's impetuosity was so far quenched that he sat himself down on a great block of grey granite to await the course of events. A quarter of an hour—half an hour—an hour went by thus, and still no hint of the cold veil being lifted. Then Celtic impatience could no longer be controlled.

"Bog-holes and quarries be hanged! I can't sit here all night," exclaimed Aleck, as he rose from his hard seat, his limbs already chilled and stiff. "There must surely be some sort of shelter to be found, even in this forsaken end of the earth, if one does but look carefully enough for it. At any rate, I can't stand *this* any longer."

But it was desperately slow work in the semi-darkness, feeling one's way cautiously forward over the rough and broken ground, thickly strewn with sharp fragments of granite; and the autumn evening was far advanced before Aleck at last found himself near a human habitation—a low, stone hut, which seemed to start out of the ground at his feet, so suddenly it loomed upon him through the fog. The cottage stood quite alone, surrounded by a low stone wall, which enclosed a little bit of land that had been reclaimed from the moor.

But no friendly gleam shone out from the small square window to welcome the weary and belated traveller, nor did his loud and continuous knocking elicit any answer from within. Still, inhabited or uninhabited, the hut offered at least better shelter for the night than the cold damp moor could do. So, with one vigorous push from his broad shoulder, Mr. Fairburn presently forced open the low door and stumbled forward into the dark apartment. At first he thought it untenanted. There were embers on the hearth, but not a spark of life in them. He spoke, but no voice answered. When, however, he succeeded in striking a match he observed in the furthest corner what seemed a bundle of clothing, and further enquiry resulted in the discovery of an old woman huddled together in a state of most abject terror. Aleck endeavoured by gentle words to allay the alarm which his forcible entrance had evidently excited, and after some time succeeded with difficulty in inducing her to quit her place of refuge.

"I've a got nort to give 'ee, sir! nort to give 'ee! If 'ee was to tak' arl there be in the place, it wouna' bring 'ee ten shillin', I sweer. What do 'ee want wi' a poor old soul like me?"

"Come, guidwife, you don't really take me for a burglar?" said Mr. Fairburn, laughing. "You know I knocked civilly enough and long enough, too, before I made my way in in this unceremonious fashion. Surely you don't expect a hungry man, who has lost his way in the fog, to spend the night contentedly out there on the moor while he sees four walls before him for shelter? Just let me have a bit of fire and a little food of any sort you've got, and I'll lie down on the hearth here till morning, and pay you well for your trouble."

The owner of the cottage seemed strangely dismayed by these very modest demands.

"Daun't 'ee go vur to ax me to do it, zir, now daunt'ee," she pleaded, earnestly. "I'm a lone widder-woman; widder Trownson, they carlls me; an' I've a got nort vit vur gentry to set avore 'ee. Can't 'ee go on jist a bit varder? It bain't more'n ite mile or zo down to A——, where 'ee might get the best o' everythin' to the Blue Boar! And what be ite mile to the like o' you, zir?"

"Not very much, perhaps, guidwife, in the daylight, but a good deal more than I am disposed to undertake just now. Come, make the best of a bad job, there's a good old creature; and when you find a bit of gold in your hand to-morrow morning you'll forgive me the

little trouble I shall cause you. And I'll promise to mend your door for you into the bargain ! Only let me have a bit of fire at once, for this fog of yours has chilled my very marrow."

Widow Trownson began new expostulations, which her visitor summarily cut short.

"Just tell me where you keep your wood, or peat, or whatever it is, and I'll soon have a blaze myself, if you really are too scared to set about it for me, guidwife."

The threat seemed at once to collect the old lady's scattered wits, and she hurriedly hobbled from the room, muttering as she went :

"He'm that masterful, he'm just nayther to hold nor to bind ! Lit un take it on's own head if harm cometh of it."

After a short absence, the widow returned with an abundant supply of peats, and with trembling fingers hastened to build up a fire, whose glowing heat soon restored the circulation to the young man's chilled frame. Then, with an alacrity much in contrast to her previous reluctance, she proceeded to place on the table a coarse loaf and a piece of cold bacon, and also to prepare some tea, the heat of which in some degree compensated for its villainous flavour. While the self-invited guest was busy doing more than justice to the scanty meal, his hostess absented herself, but presently reappeared with a strange air of mingled fear and perplexity about her.

"I've a made 'ee up a bed in there, zir," she said, in a trembling voice, pointing to an inner apartment. "Yer honour'll vind it clane, tho' maybe it ba'nt zo zoft as you'm used to lay on. Will 'ee be plazed to go in now, zir, and give me off yer wet things to dry 'ere by the fire, ready for the morn ?"

"I hope I haven't taken your own bed, guidwife ?"

"Nay, I sleepeth allus in the press-bed, yander. Then I'll gie yer honour a end o' candle now, an' ye'll gie me out the wat cloze, want'ee ? I'll hap up the fire, an' they'll be dry's a bone by the morn."

"Really, my ancient hostess grows quite attentive," thought Mr. Fairburn, as he retired for the night into the little lean-to at the back of the hut, and willingly complied with her injunctions regarding the outer portions of his attire. The sheet which covered his impromptu couch was of the coarsest, but fragrant of lavender and thyme, and if the straw mattress was hard it was also scrupulously clean. So, as the weary wanderer sank into dreamless repose, his last conscious thought was to the effect that his unpleasant adventure had after all led to a very tolerable conclusion.

Had Mr. Fairburn suddenly opened his eyes some three hours later he might have felt less confident on the subject. Close over him there leant a tall, powerfully-built man, with the look of a hunted animal in his small, sharp eyes, and the firm lines of desperate resolve imprinted on every feature. Slowly and noiselessly the door had been opened, admitting a few faint red rays from the dying embers n

the outer apartment, and with the dexterity acquired by long practice in evil ways the intruder groped his way forward.

Near the pallet he paused to cast a look of keenest scrutiny on the sleeper, while his fingers closed more firmly on the short iron bar he carried.

Satisfied that the occupant of the bed was indeed unconscious of his presence, the man proceeded to the corner where Aleck had placed his gun, and noiselessly seized the weapon, which he conveyed with the same caution into the outer room. Then he returned and felt about with fingers which seemed almost to have eyes in their tips, until he discovered the cartridge belt Aleck had worn on the preceding day. This was removed in the same stealthy fashion; and then came the last and most delicate stage of the operations.

With the iron bar firmly grasped in his right hand, the left hand of the nocturnal visitor was by imperceptible degrees slipped under the hard pillow, and as slowly withdrawn, together with the watch and pocket-book deposited there for safety. Just then there was a slight movement on the sleeper's part, and as quick as thought the heavy bar was raised above his head. Fortunately for Mr. Fairburn his slumbers were deep and sound that night, and though the eyelids quivered they did not unclose. Silently the bar sank again, and in a few moments more the door was closed as quietly as it had opened, and Aleck was again alone.

When he awoke next morning the sun was shining brightly through the single pane of greenish glass which lighted his sleeping apartment. As ablutions were evidently, owing to force of circumstances, out of the question for the present, almost the first act of his toilet was to call aloud to his entertainer for the outer garments of which she had so hospitably taken charge the previous night. No answer was returned to his appeal, however, and Mr. Fairburn called still louder. Still silence, and he got impatient.

"I say, guidwife, where are you? Don't you hear me call? I—want—my—clothes!"

But not even an echo answered.

"Confound that old idiot! She's gone off for water or something, and forgotten all about my things. I must just go and get them myself, I suppose."

So wrapping himself in the faded patch work quilt which had adorned his couch, Mr. Fairburn flung open the door of the other room and proceeded on a tour of investigation.

What was his surprise when, crouched in the self-same corner from which she had been extricated the previous evening, her hands clasped in mute entreaty, and an agony of terror depicted on her wrinkled face, he found his missing hostess!

"Poor old thing! She's evidently a little wrong in the head," said the young laird to himself. "I must try and humour her a bit."

But at the first soothing words he attempted the frightened creature crawled forward and clasped his knees convulsively.

"Vor the love o' heaven daunt 'ee harm a pure old widder 'ooman what wan't be long out 'o her grave anyhow, an' I'll tell 'ee the gospel truth, zo zure as death I wull!"

"There, there, guidwife, I'm not going to hurt you or anybody else. Get up, there's a good creature, and get me my coat and trousers, that's all I want. Don't look so scared; you didn't take me for a ghost walking in broad daylight, did you?"

"You'm zure you wan't hurt me wan I tell 'ee arl? I be in my zeventy-vour', an' vrail as a bird, I be!"

"I won't say what I shan't do if you keep me standing here much longer! Where on earth have you put my clothes? You haven't burnt them by accident, have you?"

"Oh, wat wull 'ee zay when I tell 'ee?"

And Betty Trownson fell to sobbing violently, while still clinging to her guest's knees. Mr. Fairburn fairly stamped with vexation.

"Confound it all! What on earth am I to do with this old lunatic? They'll have sent out a search party from Coombe by now, and it may be up here directly as likely as not. A pretty figure I should cut if Miss Madge put her head in the door just now! By the way, I wonder what time it really is."

And freeing himself with difficulty from the unwelcome embrace, Mr. Fairburn strode hastily towards the inner room, the impromptu dressing-gown floating boldly out behind his manly form. In another minute he returned with an angry light in his blue eyes.

"Then there really *has* been some devilry or other going on in the night, you old beldame! You've good cause to be frightened—my watch, and my money, and my gun all gone! Tell me this instant where they are, or I'll shake the truth out of your old body!"

Notwithstanding his angry words, Aleck lifted the sobbing old woman gently enough from the floor, and placed her in her wooden arm-chair.

"But first of all tell me where I shall find my clothes? I can do nothing without *them*, for certain."

"Oh, zir!—daun't 'ee be zo wrath wi' me!—they'm a gone too!"

"Gone! gone where?" gasped the victim.

"He've a took 'em, yer honour—Black Jan—an' the watch, an' the gun, an' arl! But wan't 'ee have they things he'th a left vor 'ee to wear instead? I've a got 'em arl safe here vor 'ee."

And drawing from within the press bedstead a bundle of clothing, the widow displayed before the astonished gaze of the young laird a suit of homespun, coarse indeed in texture, but pleasingly varied in hue, each parti-coloured garment being further conspicuously adorned with a huge inwoven "broad arrow," in short, the strikingly distinguished costume peculiar to the inmates of Dartmoor Prison.

Mr. Fairburn's first impulse was, I fear, to indulge in some exceed-

ingly strong language. But apparently there was something in the grim humour of the situation which suited a Highland sense of the ludicrous, for after a minute's dismayed gaze at the novel style of attire offered for his adoption, Aleck burst into a laugh so loud and long that the widow in her turn thought her guest had taken leave of his senses.

But when the laugh was over, Mr. Fairburn spoke gravely enough.

"Come, guidwife, a joke's a joke, but you must give me a more lucid explanation than this if you don't want to see the inside of Exeter gaol. What the dickens have you to do with Black Jan, who so liberally places his wardrobe at my disposal? And why didn't you at least give me the chance of a tussle with the scoundrel?"

Betty Trownson was plainly immensely relieved that her tidings had resulted in nothing harder than words.

"Oh, zir, do 'ee be thankful that 'ee be spared zafe in life and limb to zee the light o' this blessed day, instead of a lyin' in there a mangled corpse! There bain't a more desp'rate villain alive than Black Jan wan the blid of 'un is up, an' he wouldn't ha' stopped short o' murder last night if so be he couldn't ha' got they cloze any other way."

The allusion reminded Mr. Fairburn of the decidedly incomplete nature of his present attire, and led to a hasty adjournment to the inner apartment, where, seated on his mattress and wrapped in his patchwork robe de chambre, he listened to his hostess's rambling narrative.

It appeared that she had known "Black Jan," alias John Hearn, from his boyhood, he having been born and bred on the moor. While still a youth he had fallen into evil company and evil ways, and at length on a charge of housebreaking he heard a sentence of ten years' penal servitude pronounced against him. Then, naturally, he had vanished from the sight and hearing of honest folks; until as the solitary widow sat dozing over her fire the previous afternoon, a man in convict dress had stood suddenly before her, panting and exhausted from a run of many miles—"Black Jan" himself, who, having escaped under cover of the fog from one of the gangs at work on the moor, now half-besought, half-threatened the lonely old woman into affording him a temporary shelter.

"Then the scoundrel was actually in the place when I knocked yesterday afternoon!" interrupted her auditor.

"Ees fay, he was! An' both of us thought zure 'twas the sodgers after un, though he'd a made me put out my bit o' vire vor vear it might sarve 'um vor a guide. I'd o'ny jist a vinished a hidin' of un in the peat-stack, out at the back, wan 'ee brock oppen the door in that vashion, zir, an' I was jist vair mazed wi' terror."

"Small wonder you were so anxious to turn me out on the moor again! But how came you to change your mind, guidwife, and become so hospitable all in a hurry?"

"Didn't yer honour spake o' goin' out to get the turfs yerzel? and wasn't I quakin' like a leaf vor vear there'd be blidshed between the two ov 'ee? vor Jan had a zwore he'd never be tooked agen alive. And though 'ee be a vine vigure of a man, zurely, you'm no match, zir, vor Black Jan, the best wrastler in arl Devon, an' a head higher than you, bezides! Zo wan I gooed out to get they turfs an' he zweared to me I mun either get they cloze an' money vor he, or zee thee murdered ovore my eyes, I thinked it wor no zin to zave the life ov 'ee at any price. And beyides, yer honour, to tell 'ee the *whole* truth, one winter's day many a long year agone, Jan Hearn comed up here to bring me a rabbit he'd znared—'twant long after my ole man was a took—and he findth me a lyin' arl alone zick well-nigh to death's doore, an' he rinned a matter o' ite mile to vetch the doctor vor I; an' zo it zeemed I couldn't stand by an' zee un shot down by they sodgers like a mad dog, if zo be I could zave the live of un! Zo I made un zwear if he got they cloze an' money he wouldn't harm a hair ov yer honour's head, but go straight off voreign, an' be a honest man vor the rest o' his days, and thanks be to praise, he'm a gone."

"And I'm left stranded up here with a convict costume for sole attire! Well, guidwife, I suppose from your point of view you acted for the best, but you might as well have given me a voice in the matter, I think. If a ten-pound note and a shooting-suit will really make an honest man of your friend the burglar, why, it's certainly cheap at the price—to the country at any rate; but I must confess "Black Jan" seems to me to have started on his new career in somewhat questionable fashion. What did he want with the gun?"

"Hur zaith hur must have the gun, zo as to pass hizzel' off vun a gen'leman out shootin' lozed in the vog, jist as it might be yer honour yerzel. By now I doubt he'm on the railroad, well-nigh to Bristol, most like, vur he spake o' goin' aboord ship there."

"And I wish good luck to the ship that gets such a precious Jonah. I shall believe in his reformation when he sends back at least the price of my new gun—not before. Well now, guidwife, what about this clothes business? Of course I can't put on those abominations."

"Then, fay, I daun't know wat else yer honour be goin' to do, unless so be 'ee'd be willin' to have my Zunday gound. I'd go down to A—— for 'ee mysel' this minute if I could, but I'm that crippled wi' the rheumatics I couldn't walk a mile to zave a man's live, an' it be ite mile down to A——, gude. If 'ee would like to wait up here a bit, zir, there be a cart cometh from A—— wance in a fortnight, and bringth me the bits o' things I need to buy, he'll be here to-morrow is a week."

"Many thanks, my friend," said Mr. Fairburn, laughing, "but I shan't intrude on your hospitality so long as that, even if I should have to improvise a kilt or plaid out of your best petticoat and shawl.

But confound it all! there must be some better way out of the scrape than that. Carew will send out to look for me, of course, and somebody is bound to turn up here before very long; I shan't have many hours to wait."

In spite of the sanguine prediction, when night again closed in on the lonely hut Mr. Fairburn found himself obliged once more to accept the shelter of the lean-to, and the scanty accommodation it offered. Nor did the return of morning bring any sign of succour. Squire Carew and his search parties being, unfortunately, very busy dragging peat-holes on the opposite side of the moor. But when the second day, too, began to draw towards its close, and still no sign of deliverance, the prisoner's patience and his hostess's scanty store of provisions were alike exhausted by the extraordinary demands made upon them.

"Give me out the abominations!" Mr. Fairburn at last exclaimed, in the tone of a man resolved to do or die. "Give me out the abominations! I'd as soon be shot down for a runaway convict as spend another such day as this! Perhaps, as it's getting towards gloaming, I may have the luck to reach a friendly shelter before the police pounce upon me. If not, I must just tell my tale and trust to their having a few grains of common sense in their heads."

Half an hour later a tall figure in parti-coloured raiment might have been seen in the twilight making rapid way along the little track which led from widow Trownson's cottage down to A——.

"Who goes there?—stand, or I fire!"

"Thanks! On the whole, I think I prefer standing." And to the surprise of the mounted patrol, into whose hands he had fallen, the suspicious-looking pedestrian advanced to meet them with a very different gait from the slouch acquired in prison-yards. Naturally they suspected a ruse, and kept him well covered with their rifles.

"I assure you," went on the stranger, "I am quite rejoiced to meet you, for I was just beginning to fear I had lost my way yet once more on this delightful moor of yours. Besides, I am sure to fare better in the hands of intelligent officers like yourselves than if any of the yokels had chanced to catch sight of me first."

"That's very fine talk, my man, no doubt," said the senior constable, grimly, "but you don't catch old birds with chaff, you know; so we'll just trouble you to walk here between us down to A——, and give account of yourself to Inspector Fox. I needn't warn you to be up to no tricks—you'll not be such a fool as to try them on with two armed and mounted men beside you."

Fortunately for the captive "the shades of night" were falling very fast when the little procession entered the quiet country town, and they reached the police-station almost unobserved. Here they found the inspector engaged in drawing up a report, but he rose hastily at the appearance of the patrol.

"Well done, Burton! So you've got the fellow after all! There

have been far too many of these escapes in the fog lately; we shall just show those Prince's Town people that some other folks are wide-awake, whatever they may be themselves! I'm as glad——"

The inspector's happy chuckle stopped suddenly as his eye fell on the prisoner's handsome features and fair wavy hair, and he turned enquiringly to the constable.

"I'm afraid, sir, that 'Black Jan' has given us the slip after all, and I think you'll say the same when you've heard this young gen'leman's tale, though I didn't give much heed to it myself till now that I see him fairly under the gas-light. He certainly don't answer to the description, do he, sir?"

"Stand out, sir!" said the inspector, sharply to Aleck, for his disappointment made him cross. 'Black hair'—(just see if that's a wig, Burton)—'dark eyes and complexion,'—'six feet in height'—why, this fellow isn't above five foot ten!"

The inspector threw down the printed slip in disgust, and turned again to the prisoner.

"Now, sir! perhaps you'll be good enough to tell me what you mean by masquerading about the country in this fashion?"

"Wouldn't it be more to the point if I asked what your friend 'Black Jan' meant by going off with the new shooting suit Wolmer-shausen had just built for me, and the gun I gave five and twenty pounds for last season?—Look here, Mr. Inspector, I suppose you can see pretty plainly I'm not the man you want! Can't you let one of your people fetch me some food before I begin my tale? I haven't had a square meal these three days, and am pretty near famished. Do, there's a good fellow, and I'll tell you the story in brief while they're fetching it."

Something in Aleck's good-humoured voice and face must have softened the official heart of Inspector Fox, for before long the wanderer was sitting down to an abundant meal of cold beef, and its attendant pickles, while the chief of the A—— police despatched a telegraphic account of "Black Jan's" escape to head quarters.

"But I'm afraid, sir, that you'll have to come before the Justices to-morrow morning just as you are! You see we're bound to produce a man as we find him; and you've got to account to the magistrates for the possession of these clothes; what *I* believe or don't believe goes for nothing, of course. The most I can do is to get the hearing arranged for the magistrates' private room instead of for the court."

The prisoner sighed resignedly. "Well, what can't be cured must be endured, evidently; and I'm only too glad to have got back to civilisation once more on any terms. So I must take a laugh from your worthy justices with the best grace I can muster."

"Well, sir, it won't be a very long one; that is, if your story is true," added the inspector, cautiously. "For all our justices know Squire Carew well enough, though he sits on the Newton Bench, not

ours. And now, sir, I'll wish you a good night's rest, for it's past twelve o'clock."

A Bond Street lounger wearied in the search for a new sensation might perhaps have envied Mr. Fairburn next morning when he found himself ushered by Inspector Fox himself into the presence of the half-dozen Squires and Rectors who formed the A—— tribunal of justice, but I do not think anyone else would have done so.

He says himself that, in spite of "Sartor" and its lessons, never till that day had he properly realised the moral importance of a suit of clothes. He maintains that it took all his courage to resist the impulse which prompted him to shuffle his feet and hang his head under the stern gaze of six pairs of magisterial eyes, and declares that even his h's seemed to take to themselves wings and fly away as he told his plain, unvarnished tale.

Fortunately the penance was not a long one. Before the story was well over, a rosy old gentleman, Squire Norton by name, suddenly interrupted it. "Why, bless my soul! then this must be the young fellow Bob Hilliard was talking about at dinner last night! He said Tom Carew and his father were both nearly out of their wits, and dragging every peat-hole for ten miles round T——."

"But why in the name of wonder didn't they look for me on dry ground first?" interposed the prisoner.

"Because some shepherd who has a hut over on that side of the moor told a tale about having met a man in grey, with a gun on his shoulder, just before daylight; so they jumped to the conclusion that, dead or alive, you were bound to turn up somewhere in that direction."

"And no doubt he did meet a 'man in grey,' only it happened to be 'Black Jan' on his way across country!"

"That's it! The rascal wouldn't dare to make for the station here at A—— for fear of awkward results. Well now, Mr. Fairburn, the best thing I can do is to drive home and get you a rig-out of my son's, and then we'll get over to Coombe as quickly as we can, for you'll be a sight for sore eyes there, I can tell you; bright ones, too, some of them. Bob said Miss Madge was on horseback all day yesterday, scouring the moor in search of somebody."

Perhaps the most wonderful part of all this *true* history lies in the fact that Miss Madge Carew successfully accomplished what it has been often declared is beyond the power of woman to do—she conquered the feminine impulse to utter the words, "I told you so."

This extraordinary self-restraint, combined with her frank and undisguised delight at the wanderer's safe return, so touched the susceptible heart of the young laird that there is every reason to expect before next summer the skill of the Coombe Burleigh ringers and the stability of the ancient church tower will both be tested by demands for a wedding-peal worthy of the Squire's eldest daughter.

JESSIE LEETE.

ARABELLA AT THE SALES.

Scene I.

Old-fashioned rectory within the London radius. Hot July day. The Rev. Charles Fairlop, *stout, leisurely, peaceable, orthodox parson, his daughter* Sophia, *sensible girl of nineteen, and his sister* Arabella, *flighty damsel of fifty, are gathered beneath the shade of their broad cedar tree, letters and newspapers in their hands.*

Arabella (*with vivacity*). "Yes, yes, here they are, every one of them. 'Summer Clearance Sales' all over the page. Marshall and Snelgrove, Debenham and Freebody, Harvey and Nicholls, Swan and Edgar, Gask and Gask, Peter Robinson—Whiteley, of course. Oh! and here are even Howell and James, Russell and Allen, Lewis and Allenby, Redmayne ——"

Rector (*looking mildly round*). "What are you talking about, Arabella? What are all those names?"

Arabella. "So like a man, is it not, Sophia? He does not even know that these are *the* shops of London. He will say he has never either seen or heard of them!"

Rector. "I suppose I have heard of them; I may have seen them; but I cannot imagine what either you or I have now to do with them. You do not want anything."

Arabella (*throws up her hands*). "Not want anything! My dear brother, here have I been waiting, waiting for these July sales to be on, going without a waterproof all through the cold spring weather; and—and Sophia wants a light dress, and Jane has been asking for new tablecloths, and John Thomas has broken his hoe." (Sophia *laughs and is pounced upon.*) "Laugh if you please, but I know what I am about: I know how to take advantage of an opportunity: I think for the future. These sales are ——"

Rector. "All very well in their way, my dear, but ——"

Arabella (*excitedly*). "The bargains one picks up are beyond everything. My cousin Maria bought last year a dozen yards of lace flouncing for as many shillings, and half a dozen remnants of sash ribbon for nearly as few pence. Ball shoes she only gave one-and-ninepence for ——"

Sophia. "What did Maria want with ball shoes?"

Arabella. "It would have been a sin and shame to let them go. And as for the flouncing, it will last her for years."

Sophia. "It will, for she will never use it."

Arabella (*peevishly*). "How you do lie at the catch! I heard you

yourself say you meant to buy your new light dress at the after-season sales."

SOPHIA. "My dear aunt, so I shall. I hope to get one for a good deal less than I should at another time, but ——" (*pauses to look at her father*).

RECTOR (*puts his rather heavy foot in it all unconsciously*). "Aye, aye, trust my Sophia. She will get just what she needs, no more and no less."

ARABELLA (*colouring up*). "But *I* am not to be trusted. Upon my word, I did not expect——" (*Rambles on for some time, while father and daughter unite in peacemaking, and signify to one another that they must give way about the sales.*)

ARABELLA (*restored to good humour*). "So you really thought I should be run away with? Well, at my age—but, to be sure, I always was young, and I suppose I always shall be. The staid Sophia must keep me within bounds to-morrow, and we shall only buy the very cheapest things at each place. Where shall we begin? Shall we go first to the North or the South side of the park? Shall we take the underground, or the omnibus? Sloane Square for Harvey and Nicholls, or the Royal Oak for Whiteley's. See, Charles, how methodical I can be; I know the best way to each place; I ——"

RECTOR (*drily*). "I have not the slightest doubt, my dear Arabella, of your finding the direct route to every snare; my only fear is, that, once in the trap, once inside ——"

ARABELLA. "Once inside I am at home everywhere. Even in the labyrinths of Whiteley's, with the 'seven shops through' and 'Queen's Road department' being dinned into my ears on every side, I am never at a loss ——"

SOPHIA (*aside*). "Papa, it is of no use, she cannot understand. Just let her go."

RECTOR (*shrugs his shoulders*). "Let her go? Cart ropes would not keep her back. And she will toil, and strain, and struggle to the front of every counter, pant up every staircase, squeeze through every doorway ——"

SOPHIA (*smiling*). "And examine the reduction of every ticketed article within her reach. But she has set her heart on going, so please order the chaise for an early train, that we may have the whole day for this weary pilgrimage. I will do my best to get through it without too much loss of money, time and temper."

RECTOR (*alone*). "My daughter's sweetness almost reconciles me to my sister's simplicity, and her wisdom compensates for Arabella's folly."

SCENE II.

London. MISS FAIRLOP *and her niece, plainly attired in washing dresses, black-beaded mantillas, and serviceable bonnets, emerge from an East End omnibus, holding large bags in their hands.*

SOPHIA (*presently*). "Is there really need for our going to any more now? We have been to so many, and seen the same things everywhere. Everywhere the same piles of parasols and umbrellas, the same cascades of fur trimmings and boas, the same vast plateaux of artificial flowers, rainbows of ribbons, waggon loads of green wicker work, and hecatombs of fans, sachets, handkerchiefs, shawls and cloaks. You have already bought more——(*chokes down the word* "*trumpery*") than you know what to do with, and ——"

MISS F. (*complacently*). "Very true; we have done a great deal. We have had a most successful expedition. Such bargains. But it would be a pity not to go to all. I am laying in a perfect stock of winter usefuls, and though you tried to dissuade me from taking the whole of that strip of window blind, it is the very thing my cousin Maria is sure to want directly she sees it, and she will take any I have over. As for the Swiss embroidery, it always comes in; and though I have no immediate need of gloves, it would have been foolish to let those very cheap ones go. Gloves will *always* come in. Those pretty neckties, only fourpence three-farthings each, I shall give the maids. They will never guess how little they cost."

SOPHIA. "Why not? They have only to come to the sales like ourselves."

MISS F. "To be sure, that is true. Well, the ties must find other recipients then; I could not pass them over. Those carriage blankets were really marvellous, Sophia; I must speak to your papa first, but I hope he will send for one at once."

SOPHIA. "What in the world should we do with a smart embroidered carriage blanket on our poor old chaise?"

MISS F. "They were going such bargains. But, however ——" (*Enters a doorway, turning her head from side to side, and proceeding to investigate articles of every description as she slowly moves forward.*) "Now, Sophia, for your summer dress. Sophia, Sophia, wait one moment: you go on so fast; do look at these evening wraps—I call them extremely pretty; and this dark red ——"

SOPHIA (*gently urging her aunt forward*). "Very pretty. The costume department is upstairs."

MISS F. (*coming to a standstill*). "I have a great mind to have some of that fringe. Fringe is usually such a price, and my mantle ——"

SOPHIA (*persuasively*). "Yes, but you can think how much of it would be required while we are upstairs."

MISS F. "To be sure, yes. What a pretty work-bag. My work-bag is quite worn out."

SOPHIA (*hastily*). "Those are nice table-covers half-way up the stairs."

Miss F. "Where, where?"

Sophia. "In front." (*Aside*). "Thank heavens, we are here at last. The only place I really wished to come to, and I should thankfully have given it up to have got away." (*Looks at reduced summer dresses.*) "My dear aunt, do sit down and rest."

Miss F. (*sinks wearily into a chair*). "How tired I am!" (*Suddenly rises, and darts forward to where another customer is having costumes spread before her.*) "Please allow me to see that one. It is just the sort of gown I require. How much? Six guineas? Six guineas *reduced?* Oh!" (*Returns to her seat somewhat daunted. After another minute's pause, darts forward again.*) "*How* much did you say those tulle skirts were? Five shillings? *Five shillings!* Why, Sophia, Sophia ——" (*Repeats the price, meantime turning over in her hand a faded and soiled ball skirt, which has been reduced to the above sum.*)

Sophia (*in a low voice*). "My dear aunt, I would not be seen in such a thing."

Miss F. "But, my dear, the price."

Sophia. "What does the price matter if I could not wear it? It would simply be five shillings thrown away."

Miss F. "Well, it is not as fresh as—perhaps you are right. Now, what have you chosen? Oh, already? But, my dear, do not be in too great a hurry. Look at this, and this, and this——" (*Going from one to another. Meantime,* Sophia *gives her address, and pays for her purchase*). "Ready so soon? And you have actually bought it? Well, now for downstairs again. I saw some luggage straps on my way up, and the holidays will soon be here."

Sophia. "But we are not going away."

Miss F. "We *may* go. It is well to be prepared."

Sophia. "The other door, aunt. It will take us into Oxford Street." (*Succeeds in gradually beguiling her aunt towards it, and across the threshold; but* Miss Fairlop *comes to a dead stop before the window.*)

Miss F. "Those curtains, my dear. Your father's study. Really it does need new curtains."

Sophia. "Even if it does, we have no measurements."

Miss F. "True. Well, I must measure when we go home. But that small rug, there is no measurement required for it. So pretty, and so cheap. It would really be a pity not to ——" (*Re-enters the shop, and buys the rug.*)

Miss F. (*in renewed spirits*). "Now for the other side of the Park, though to be sure, I have not much money left. Still, we may as well just have a look."

Sophia (*archly*). "And get your waterproof."

Miss F. "My waterproof? I am afraid I shall have to give that up. It must wait for another year, or I can get it at Christmas. Sales are on again then, you know. After all, in such weather one should not be thinking of waterproofs."

Scene III.

The Rector's *study. Round the open windows the westeria and dark red trumpet-blossoms cluster thickly; while the luscious scent of the magnolia makes all the warm air heavy within. Every now and then a large moth dashes wildly in, and beats itself against the glass of the solitary lamp, or is heard rustling up and down in the curtained corner of the ceiling. Bats flit past in the dusk.* Mr. Fairlop, *extended luxuriously on the worn-out ample couch, fans himself with his pocket-handkerchief and soliloquises half aloud.*

Rector. "What a day to have been fagging and sweating in town! How thankful I am to have this quiet old semi-country place to live in! It is at least out of the glare and fever of London, if it is not quite among the bean fields. The flowers thrive too, and we can lead a rational life—if Arabella would only let us. What a time she is in coming! That poor child of mine ——" (*Takes out his gold repeater watch, and consults it. The door-bell rings at the moment, and presently in come the absentees.*)

Arabella (*triumphantly*). "Here we are, here we are. Well, you do look comfortable, and as if you had lain there all day; while we—Oh, my dear Charles, such a day as we have had! Such heat, such noise, such a Babel of voices, such crowding, such cramming, such a fuss to get a thing before it is snapped up by somebody else, such a Napoleonic expedition altogether!"

Rector (*rather gravely*). "You have bought a great deal then?"

Arabella. "Indeed we have. Every sort of thing. Garments great and small, parasols, bags, bonnets, handkerchiefs, knick-knacks ——"

Rector (*raising his hand somewhat peremptorily*). "Not quite so loud, my dear. You must try—ahem—to moderate your voice a little. I have something to say; something has happened—I have had some bad news." (*Stops, and looks at his daughter, who looks anxiously at him in return.*)

Arabella (*excitedly*). "Bad news! How? What? From whom?"

Rector. "Of course we half expected it. Poor Susan's husband ——"

Arabella. "Dear me!" (*Pauses.*) "But still it is only in India. I am very sorry; but ——"

Rector. "As I merely saw it in the papers, there is still some hope that I may be mistaken."

Arabella. "Mistaken? Oh, no. People never are mistaken that way. You may depend upon it you were in the right. Well, I am really grieved—poor Susan— and the worst of it is that Jay's was the one and only place we did not go near to-day. Not one single, solitary black thing did I buy." (*Leaves the room.*)

Rector. "She is utterly heartless."

SOPHIA. "No, papa, not that; only so much taken up by the one thought that she has no room left for any other. These sales ——" (RECTOR *curbs an unclerical exclamation*). "She will be quieter to-morrow, and able to show her better self."

The morrow comes. RECTOR *enters the ladies' room with a cheerful step.*

RECTOR. "All right! I was mistaken, and I am most heartily rejoiced at it. These newspaper telegrams are a perfect nuisance, and one never knows what they really mean. It was another Mr. Smith altogether. So now, Arabella, I suppose you will congratulate yourself that you did not go to Jay's—or whatever the name is—and be able to enjoy your purchases."

ARABELLA (*looking rather foolish*). "Dear me, brother, I wish I had known earlier, for you gave me such a fright that I ——"

RECTOR. "That you—well?"

ARABELLA. "I sold the whole pack to Lady Clipshift, half-price, this morning."

RECTOR. "This morning!"

SOPHIA. "Half-price!"

ARABELLA (*recovering herself*). "Half-price, taking one with another. She would not have some without all—I told her how matters lay—we roughly reckoned up the whole, and she very kindly agreed to take it off my hands; and uncommonly lucky I thought myself, to get off so cheap."

SOPHIA. "The purchases you made only yesterday!"

ARABELLA. "It is no matter. The sales are still on. I do not regret a single thing; for successful as we were yesterday, I feel quite convinced that we shall be still more successful—to-morrow."

L. B. WALFORD.

WHEN!

When I am young again I'll hoard my bliss,
Nor dream that inexhaustible it is,
Remembering old age comes after this,
Joy grows to pain;
Nor waste one moment of youth's rose-sweet hours,
Nor trample one of all its countless flowers,
But drink the summer sun and soft spring showers,
When I am young again!

I will be wise with wisdom dearly won
By those who through life's wood have nearly run,
Learn what to do, or what to leave undone,
Dare or refrain;
I will not seek into my mouth to take
The bitter apple of the acrid lake;
But at clear fountains all my thirsts will slake,
When I am young again!

I will not brush the bloom to reach the core,
Remembering how it chanced with me before,
And bloom, once lost, returns not any more—
Hard cores remain:—
I will fence round with prudence, and secure
A lasting bloom whose freshness shall endure;
Oh, I will guard my peach of youth, be sure,
When I am young again!

When I am young again I'll spend no breath
In bitter words the heart remembereth,
When bitterness is swallowed up by Death
Holding sole reign;
I'll love so well that if they pass to sleep
Before me, I shall have no watch to keep
Over their tears—only my tears to weep,
When I am young again!

I will not lightly joy, nor idly grieve,
Nor for a heaven itself one soul deceive,
Nor will I be deceived, vainly believe,
Nor love in vain!
Come back, lost youth! Oh, Fate, that one gift give;
Then I will show that I have learned to live.
Youth shall be wise, and two and two make five,
When I am young again!

E. Nesbit.

UNDER NORTHERN SKIES.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," &c.

Runic Stone.

THERE was nothing in Allinge to call for special attention. We felt that in leaving the calm and dignified repose of the ruins of Hammershuus, we had sacrificed much to time and necessity.

Once settled at the inn that evening, we sauntered out to reconnoitre. Very little repaid us for our pains. There was an ordinary and commonplace look about the place. The very air seemed hot and stifling; unwholesome and confined. Built on the island slopes, the free winds of heaven had not sufficient play here. A wind blowing off the sea from the west was the only wind to which they seemed exposed. It was relaxing and depressing. The very men lounging about looked limp and lazy; the few women were loud and untidy. No doubt the more respectable and the quieter had their homes and occupations to attend to and were invisible, unheard. These women were the wives and sweethearts of the fishermen, looking on at the boats, wrangling and laughing amongst each other, taking life as they found it, and letting the world roll on as it would.

The shades of night were gathering. Out on the water one saw nothing but a great dark expanse domed by a star-spangled sky. The small lighthouse had set up its beacon, which threw a track of light upon the water beneath. A few fishing boats were preparing their nets and getting ready to put out to sea. Sounds of music still came from those open windows; forms flitted about the lighted rooms; everyone, in doors or out, was enjoying himself in his own way. Up the slopes, lights gleamed from small houses. There were narrow turnings one hardly cared to enter. Not that they looked formidable or numerous, or even burglarious, but dirty and suffocating; no ventilation within doors, closeness without. The people, men and women, looked at us, and passed their remarks. There

was a crowded, crushed feeling about this little town, Allinge, a want of air and space. Any longer sojourn than one night would hardly have been tolerable.

The morning came, and in its early freshness Allinge looked less objectionable than it had seemed last night. Darkness and shadows had disappeared. In broad sunlight, even the narrow thoroughfares lost their close, uncanny feeling. And the sea stretched out like a sapphire far as the eye could reach, sleeping, flashing in the sunshine. Last night we had had a star-gemmed sky, this morning we had a star-gemmed-sea. This would have reconciled us to a far worse spot than Allinge; would have purified—we had almost said sanctified—a

CIRCULAR CHURCH.

far more objectionable settlement. Away out on the surface of the water was the small island of Christiansö, a mere fortification, looking white and beautiful, calm and hazy, like a cloud resting upon a painted ocean.

All this we saw whilst breakfast was preparing at the hands of the bustling maiden, who helped one to the sweets of life in the form of delicious honey, and stimulated one's nervous system with coffee of the finest brew. Even Allinge had its good points in these small luxuries and refinements, which play no inconsiderable part in making life bearable.

Nevertheless, we were not sorry to turn our backs upon the little place. Man is not always as grateful as he might be. Small mercies seldom stir up great emotions, though they make up largely the sum and substance of existence. Very often, if we only knew it, we turn our backs in this calm, deliberate manner upon what would have

proved life's turning point, life's happiness, the flowing of fortune's tide. The fat old landlady had received us on her steps, and on her steps dismissed us. Between whiles she had been invisible, and on these occasions appeared and disappeared, erect and motionless, as if wound up for the ordeal.

We passed upwards out of the town, and, for a time, lost the sea; our road lay inland. We were approaching the most beautiful and luxuriant part of the island; a small paradise of fertility, with groves of waving trees and fields of golden corn. It seemed as if one had only to tell things to grow and they did so. The intense heat of the sun was tempered by a refreshing breeze. The blue sky overhead, across which a few fleecy clouds now and then hurried, filled one with delight. Had the thermometer been up to 212° one would scarcely have quarrelled with it in a summer chiefly remarkable for its low temperature.

We passed through all this happy, smiling country, occasionally coming to a farm-house with great barns and buildings that spoke of a prosperity which here seems uninterrupted. The hay was all cut in the fields, and some of it was carried, and some was being made: the makers happy, laughing, singing in lightness of heart. Here, it seemed, we had come upon fields Elysian, where care and sorrow entered not, and people rejoiced in eternal youth and beauty; a land flowing with milk and honey, corn and wine—red, sparkling wine of which one might take deep deep draughts: refreshing, exhilarating; never sense or soul stealing.

We presently came upon one of the circular churches for which Bornholm is famous, which carry us back nearly a thousand years in the world's history, to the days when Christianity was first known in the island. These quaint churches do more to give a distinctive character to the island than almost anything else. On this flat ground they are seen for considerable distances; landmarks of singular aspect. In early days they served as fortified towers, when religion was another name for war and persecution, and long and jealous conflicts were going on for the mastery between church and state. Tall, circular towers are they to-day, with white-washed walls glistening in the sun, standing out in contrast with the black, wooden, pointed roofs above them.

The church was surrounded by a quiet grave-yard, with small wooden crosses, where the dead rest under green mounds, often flower strewn: rest after life's calm and even tenour, as it seems to run in Bornholm. It appears to be nothing but a long, quiet, pastoral symphony. Arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses; simple, contented rustics playing Corydon to a yet simpler Phyllis. I daresay we exaggerated it all, but such was the effect upon us of all this peace and sunshine, these waving fields of golden corn, this clover-scented air mixing with the sweet scent of the new mown hay.

In the church there had recently been a wedding. All down the

little aisle, bunches of heather and flowers were propped in the old-fashioned pews, just as the holly used to be propped in our own churches at Christmas—and may still be found here and there in districts where time has stood still, and people are yet delightfully simple and refreshing. Here, to-day, the church was loaded with flowers and heather, and decorated with a green arch under which the happy pair must have passed out upon a world henceforth to be fairer than ever to them. The flowers, dead and drooping, looked sad, emblems as they were of mortality.

When I remember all
  The friends so linked together,
I've seen around me fall
  Like leaves in wintry weather;
  I feel like one who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted,
  Whose lights are fled,
  Whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed.

Unbidden, the words came uppermost; they had no business to do so. There ought to be nothing here suggestive of sadness, and probably farthest from sadness were this happy Phyllis and Corydon. The altar rails were also loaded with decorations, and the rude chandelier suspended from the ceiling. It all relieved the heaviness of the interior, which, though no doubt quaint and singular, was not beautiful.

The old sexton or clerk, who kept the keys, was anxious to show us the belfry and the bells, of which he seemed as proud as if they had been a regalia. He begged us to try the tones, and there went ringing out upon the still air a startling peal. The Vicarage was hard by, and if the good parson was at home, he would know well what it meant. Not an alarm of fire; or of an enemy approaching by sea to take captive the flourishing island; not a passing bell to tell of a soul winging its flight to eternal regions; but merely his old clerk—he must have been eighty at least—showing off his treasures in pride and fulness of heart. There appeared no one else to terrify. The broad fields around were deserted. Far off, through the opened shutters, one caught sight of the shimmering sapphire sea. Below, at the little gate of the church, our Jehu was stretched lazily upon his box, indifferent to bells and circular churches and life in general. There was neither romance nor simplicity about him. But then he came from Rönne, the capital of Bornholm: and Rönne was the least interesting spot in all the island.

We left it all behind us. The church with its dead emblems of happiness; the bells, on which we had rung a peal for very joy; the Vicarage, with the Vicar at a window, staring at us with a kindly smile, and making us a polite bow as we departed, wishing us, we felt quite sure, God speed in his heart; the old custodian who

saw us off the premises, like a faithful warden true to his trust; the groves of trees that bent to the breeze, perhaps whispered of the happy ceremony they had lately witnessed, and cast a grateful shade from the burning glare of the sun, not yet up to its meridian. We left all this behind us and continued our way.

We were now making for what is supposed to be the prettiest part of the island—Dyndalen. Presently, a gentle descent towards the sea coast, amidst wooded and luxuriant slopes, and we had reached our morning's halting-place. A goodly-sized inn, shut out from the high road, surrounded by gardens and orchards, and a wooded valley given up to everything wild and beautiful in forest life. Here we bid farewell to that solitude and repose that had distinguished our morning drive. This spot was evidently the centre of attraction in the island. A long table in the dining-room—nay, in several rooms—covered with cloths that had once been white, but were now occupied with an army of flies, living and dead, testified to the number of visitors staying here or expected to arrive. From somewhere or other there came a sound of ninepins—a vulgar discord that had no place in the harmony of this refined little island. Voices raised in laughter smote the air; girls were singing; others were playing croquet.

We quickly left it all. Left the horses to their repose, Jehu to don a working blouse, and stable and groom his cattle, and take his pleasure: and went down towards the sea, through lovely, laughing slopes and wooded undulations, all gilded and glowing with sunshine, all reposing under the bluest of skies.

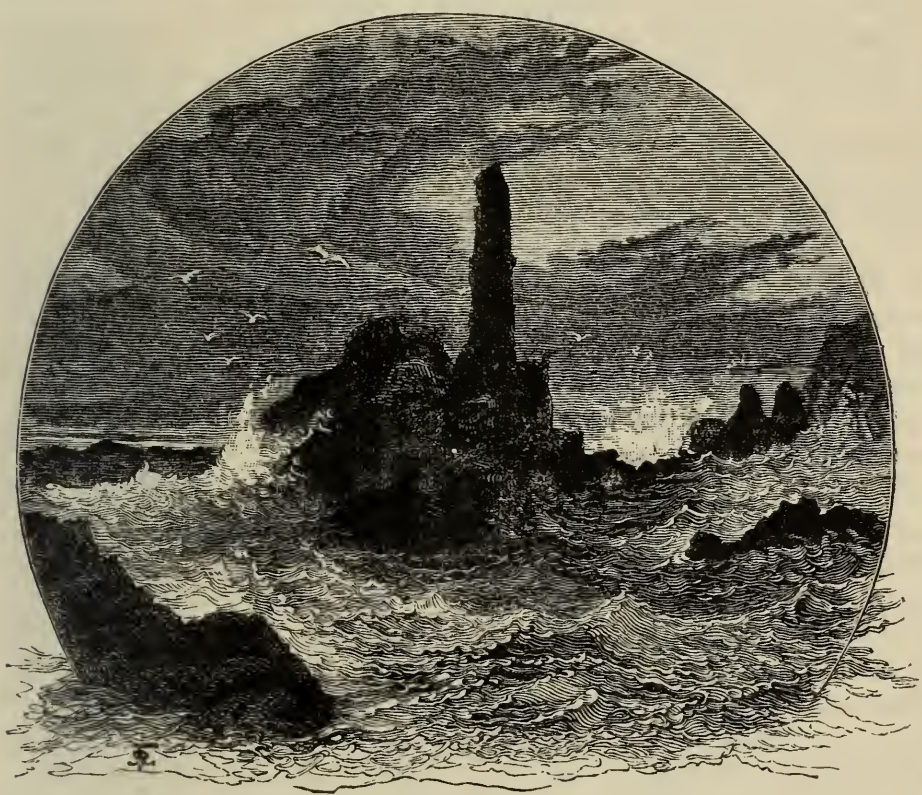
Oh, the cherry trees that gladdened us, and tantalised us, and delayed us on our way! Such immense trees we had never seen, or such an abundance of fruit; trees literally groaning with the weight of their delicious burdens. But nearly all the fruit was out of reach. We had to look and long. There was no ladder at hand; no monkeys to pelt us with cherries instead of cocoanuts; no possibility of climbing. We invented all sorts of manœuvres; lassoes that were just too short; leaps that just touched fruit-laden branches, only to spring back minus a leaf, plus a disappointment. It was no use. We met two or three people coming up as we were going down. They had conscious looks and black lips, and evidently had found out a secret way of reaching the forbidden fruit. Why not we?

We passed on to the sea and another Jacob's ladder: a rough, picturesque, beautiful descent into a small, rocky, romantic cove. We jumped from one rock to another until we reached an old man and a boat: the Old Man of the Sea, perhaps. But the tables were turned. He did not take us prisoners—we detained him; not longer than he bargained for, but longer than others bargained for, as we presently discovered.

He pushed away from the rocks into the open water. Calm as it was, scarcely a ripple upon its dark blue flashing surface, yet it broke

boisterously amongst the rocks; broke and beat and foamed and threw its white spray around. Up on the land, looking out from a distance, we should have said so much surf was impossible.

The rocks were beautiful and broken; high and rugged and wild. There were small recesses, that might almost have become harbours, given over to the seagulls; rocks honeycombed with the influence of time and water and weather; caves and natural arches, into which we passed for a moment, out from the heat and glare of the sun, the sparkling water, into a chilling gloom.



NEAR DYNDALEN.

We paddled backwards and forwards, in and out of these rocky recesses, rejoicing in the wild freedom, the perfect solitude; revelling in the plash and dash of the waves, mingled with the cry and clang of the seagulls. Then the old boatman went the other way, and where the rocks gave place to a shelving beach, above which a wooded valley ran up into the land, he put us on shore. It was not the easiest task in the world. Broken rocks were all about, and the water splashed and broke over them like a small tempest.

Putting us on shore, he went off again into smooth places, and rested on his oars. We went up the Dyndalen. A beautiful wood with trees, young and old, all shadow and sunshine, leaves glinting and rustling; paths moss grown, strewn with ferns and wild flowers. The silence was perfect. Not a bird chirped; even the plash of the sea could

not be heard—lost, perhaps, in the rustle of the leaves: a forest sound that never breaks the forest silence, but makes it seem more palpable. Not a human being was visible; there was no trace of well-trodden paths to mark the presence of man; nothing but soft moss spread like a rich carpet under one's feet. Here and there a squirrel ran across, and up a tree, and looked down impudently at us from an overhanging bough, with black, sparkling eyes and curled-up tail: dark-brown little creatures, beautiful and graceful, but wild as wild could be. They would not come at our bidding. We had not Thoreau's gift to charm them.

The skipper of our steamer had said there were spots in Bornholm in which one could linger days. It was quite true. We could have lingered days here, perhaps weeks. These sylvan solitudes were inexpressibly charming, and might be varied by the solitude of sea and rocks and caves, almost more charming still. Here nature in all her forms and phases, all her beauty, was at her best.

But to linger was not for us, who counted our time by moments, not by days or even hours. We lingered as long as possible in these sunny glades, these whispering trees through which the sun glinted and made pictures upon the mossy paths. Then we went down to the beach, half doubting. Had we tried the old boatman's patience too far? Would he have departed, and left us to find our way back overland, through brake and briar?

No; there was the good old weatherbeaten figure, still resting on its oars, calm as Patience smiling at Grief. He evidently felt there was nothing else for it, but when we appeared he roused up with energy, and steered in amongst the rocks with no little trouble. The sea was even more plashing and boisterous than it had been an hour ago. We had to perform impossible feats in jumping from rock to rock, slippery and sliding as small icebergs, until we reached the boat. Then he pushed out again, and in the broad, smooth sea, in full view of the rocky coast, we returned to our first starting point.

On the rocks at the bottom of Jacob's ladder, gesticulating and impatient, a noisy group awaited our return. How long they had been there, "standing in dangerous paths," we knew not. We selfishly consoled ourselves with the thought that we had not had to wait, to whom time was precious and moments were golden. As we landed and gave place, we felt—for we did not look—that the group glared upon us. Yet we were not guilty of intent. How could we tell that others were waiting? or that there was only one boat for all requirements? As for the old boatman, a substantial fee made him our champion for ever. So we departed with a light heart and a free conscience.

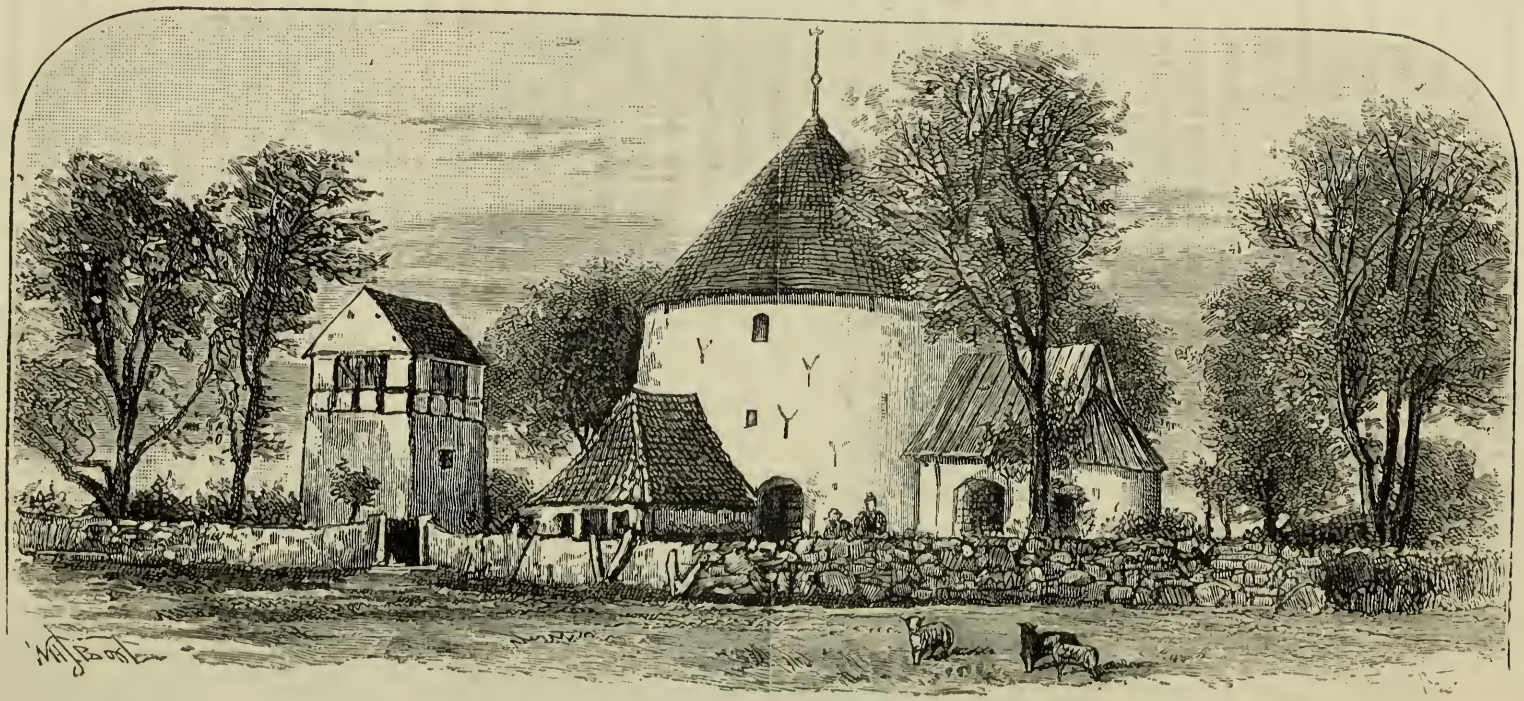
We set out once more in the early afternoon. The beauty of the day was uninterrupted. The character of the scenery did not change. The island is very flat about here, except immediately on the sea coast, where—as at Dyndalen—we have seen that it falls

away in hills and valleys, laughing, fertile and wooded, and terminates in wild and rugged rocks. Inland, the aspect is the exact opposite to all this. It is a pastoral scene of peace and plenty. A succession of fields, well cultivated and productive. The waving corn is conspicuous ; the flowering clover, and the hay drying upon the meadows, delight the senses. Straight, white roads intersect the fields ; roads well made and well kept, as everything is in this flourishing island. Bornholm is a wonderfully green oasis in the midst of a desert of water. Yet its attractions are so simple and unpretending that one must be keenly sensitive to the beauties of nature to appreciate and feel its influence. There will be found no excitement to awaken violent emotions in a single acre of the whole island. Its charms are of quite a different description.

On our way this afternoon, we passed the largest of the circular churches in Bornholm, forming quite a small settlement. There was the bell tower near it, which, of course, we mounted. But the keeper of these treasures, the sexton, whether old or young we could not tell, was absent. He was away in the fields, haymaking, and had been good enough to leave all doors open for the benefit of strayers and strangers. In his absence, the bells had rest. We thought it wiser not to ring a peal, startling the air, and bringing up the good man to see what had gone wrong or who was trespassing. The view from the tower well repaid us for our trouble in mounting ; disclosed a wide surface of laughing fields, intersected by long white roads, and here and there a farm house with its dependencies, larger and more important than itself, a far off sapphire sea shimmering in the sunshine, as broad and full and warm now at three o'clock in the afternoon as it had been at ten in the morning. In the midst of the sea, the small island and refuge of Christiansö looked like a cloud hardly bigger than a man's hand rising out of the water. Groves and plantations of trees here and there broke the flat surface of Bornholm, and the monotony of the corn-fields : green waving avenues delicious for the eye to rest upon, still more grateful and delicious to pass into out of the sun's glare and heat.

Just below was the vicarage, outside the little grave-yard, separated from it by a garden stocked with roses. It was very difficult to restrain the wish to enter and keep one's hands from picking and stealing. Probably, no one would less have objected than the good Vicar. But for want of courage, or for want of a little knowledge, we miss many good things in life. A conscience over tender, and to be righteous over much, inevitably debars one from many things in this world that would otherwise be lawful. The vicarage, like the church, was white, and looked cool and inviting. Creepers hung about the windows, and flowers within spoke of a ministering spirit, sensible of the influence of refinement. The house was quite imposing, and seemed almost larger than the church, if not so lofty.

As usual, in the grave-yard were more small wooden crosses than



CIRCULAR CHURCH.

marble monuments, and the dead seemed to sleep more calmly under the green mounds than under cold and formal stones. Daisies grew above them, and flowers bloomed. There was a newly-made grave, evidently just prepared to receive one whose quiet annals were closed. In such quiet it hardly seemed that anyone could die, hardly that there was anyone to die. At the end of the grave-yard was a small building that looked like a mortuary chapel, but on going round it proved to be the good Vicar's coach-house. The doors were open, and the gig was reposing shafts downwards. With this, no doubt, he perambulated the island, and paid his pastoral and social visits. The horse was absent, probably grazing in some neighbouring field, growing fat and lazy with the abundance of good things that fell to his lot in this cornucopia state of existence, this modern land of Canaan.

How quiet and still it all was. What a strange, calm, uneventful life to lead in the eyes of those whose lines are cast amidst the busy haunts of men. How different the one's thoughts, feelings and emotions from the other's; what different stakes are being played for, what different aspirations, ambitions. If the good Vicar here was not an emblem of worth and virtue, where could they be found? It is very well to say that human nature is the same all the world over. Born the same it may be, but the temptations of the world are reduced to their lowest minimum in these far-away corners of the earth, where the seasons run their quiet course, and seed time and harvest are the great events of life's calendar.

Leaving the church almost reluctantly, we presently came to one of the most curious spots—perhaps the most curious spot—in all the island. A strange grove, dating back to pre-historic times. We had to turn out of our way for it, for it lies out of the direct route. Outside the little gate admitting to the charmed circle, a small party had encamped upon the grass. Their horse was grazing and their cart was at rest; they had boiled a kettle with sticks, and were enjoying themselves in a quiet way. Not a sound came from them to disturb the sacred silence of the grove. The very nod with which they greeted us in their country fashion as we passed was given in absolute silence. They might have been dumb as the stones on which we presently gazed.

We passed through the little gate into the shelter and shadow of the pine trees. Dark and melancholy was the effect. We were in a new world, or rather in an old one, gazing on ancient remains. Runic stones standing upright, with a few records and inscriptions; and mounds, where no doubt the dead lay in the rest and repose of untold centuries. The far off dead, barbarous and heathen, who worshipped here according to their lights.

The paths ran round in circles, intersected by shorter paths and devices, with the puzzling turnings of a maze whose meanings were lost to mankind. Small mounds rose here and there with fortifications.

All about, visible through the trees, were the upright runic stones. The melancholy pines cast long shadows. The sunbeams penetrating this mysterious grove almost seemed to lose their brightness and warmth. A strange atmosphere, solemn and weird, penetrated the place through and through, cast its spell upon mind and spirit. One seemed chain-bound by its influence, as if the spirits of those who had walked and worshipped in these groves yet hovered about them. The very rustling of the pine trees above our heads seemed charged with voices of an unknown tongue. The very shadows, deeply marked between the intervening sun spaces, might have been shades of the departed, that would presently lift and flit to and fro, and fill the groves with the mystery of the supernatural. It seemed impossible to leave the spot. Gloomy and mysterious and depressing, it yet had a strange power to charm, which seemed to steal over the senses like the subtle fumes of a deadly nightshade. It was not a healthy influence, but it was difficult to resist.

Here, in these groves, in those unknown ages, overshadowed by trees such as these, the heathen rites of a mysterious religion were celebrated to the invisible and the imaginary. Rude sacrifices, immolations at the altar of superstition, were offered up in a vain propitiation. We had never before found a spot where all this was so wonderfully realised. It is doubtful whether such another exists.

The remains of Stonehenge, those great ruins on Salisbury Plain, cleaving the sky with sharp outlines, in that desolate moor, where nothing else seems to stand between them and the eternity of space, appeared powerless to impress the mind in comparison with the groves and stones and mounds and circles of Louiselund. The one is a ruin and a remains, requiring a key to its interpretation : the other might have been in full possession of rites and ceremonials only an hour ago. It might still be warm with the blood of sacrifice, still echoing with the cry of a victim.

The whole was surrounded by a thick, high hedge, which still more separated the grove from the outer world. Beyond that hedge, fields of waving corn stretched far away on the one side, bathed in sunshine. They seemed out of place, unneeded. We were under the spell of Louiselund. Life ought to be visionary and spiritual. The grosser wants of the body had no place here. Existence was supported without food : time was not marked by moments and hours.

We sat and absorbed the influence in spite of ourselves. Sat upon a sacred mound and dreamed dreams, and imagined the air full of spiritual influences about to claim us for their own. Our past life was over, remembrance was dying out, the world as we had known it was fading. A torpor was creeping over our senses ; our nerves vibrated like a harp of a thousand strings struck by unseen hands. We were powerless to move. The shadows lengthened and the sun went downwards, and still we moved not. How long we should have

remained I know not, but presently Jehu, growing anxious or impatient, came quietly through and searched us out. The spell was broken. He brought us back to earthly and present things with the shock of one who is suddenly awakened. But it was a very necessary awakening. We would not have fallen under the spell of those unseen influences, whatever they might be—for I verily believe that some uncanny and mysterious power claims for its own those who have the temerity to wander within its sacred groves. Like the labours of Sisyphus, you might—not roll a stone, but wander round and round those magic circles, chained to their orbit with sure mesmeric tyranny.

We passed out from the old world of superstition and heathenism into the healthier light and influence of the new. The group upon the grassy slopes were exactly as we had first found them. They had ended their Arcadian feast, but had not stirred. Probably the eloquence and good fellowship of Jehu had enchained them: just as a more subtle influence had kept us spellbound within the groves of Louiselund. But if, as Caliban says, they had "filled the isle with noises, and sweet airs that gave delight and hurt not," they must have been very hushed and subdued, for we had heard no sound. Either this, or in those charmed groves our spirits had actually taken flight into the mysterious regions of the unseen.

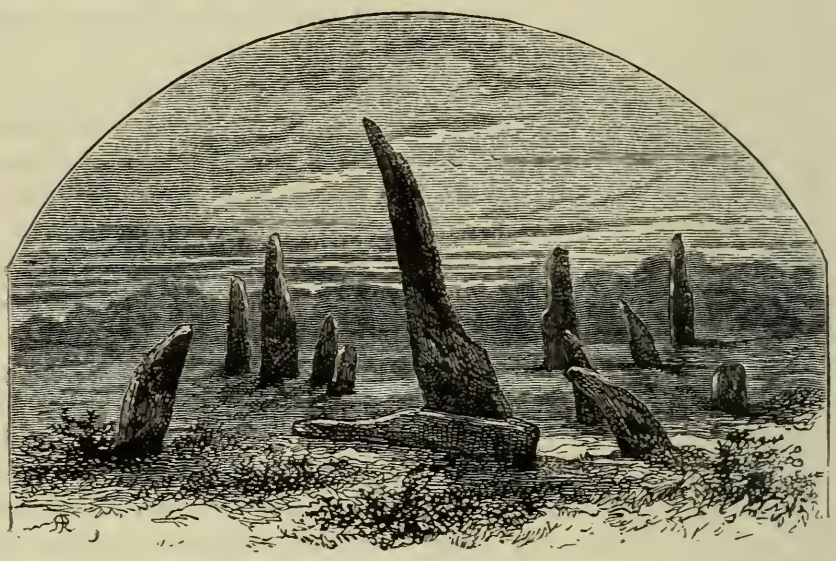
We went our way. The picnic group gave us another silent nod at parting: no word, no smile, not moving a muscle. They could not be automatons, for these neither eat nor drink, and there on the grass was a small charred ring, remains of the fire that had burnt the sticks that had boiled the kettle that had made the tea that automatons could not have drunk. With the departure of Jehu's fascinations, they probably would figuratively fold their tent and seek fresh pastures.

We were bound for Svanike, a small town on the coast, and, for Bornholm, an important town. We reached it about an hour after leaving Louiselund, passing through the same characteristic, placid scenery, which chanted us one long pastoral symphony as we went. A symphony addressed to the bounties of Earth, a Hymn of Praise to the beauties of Nature. Everywhere we saw these waving fields ripening to harvest. At one large farmhouse, an immense waggon was turning in, literally groaning under its weight of hay. Men were at work in the yard, housing another load in the great barns, sending it with huge pitch-forks into the open mouth of a great loft that greedily refused to be satisfied.

We passed on, getting nearer and nearer to the sea, which, in front of us, shone like a flashing sapphire. One is never tired of the comparison. How can we have too much sunshine and blue skies and seas; and fresh, glorious breezes, gladdening the smiling earth, and rustling and glistening amongst the forest branches, and filling one with happiness and exhilaration? How can one have too much

of influences that have so often reasserted and restored life to the dying; convinced and conquered many a doubting spirit, and brought it back to the faith of its early youth? We cannot have too much of them even in visions; would we could ever have them before us as realities.

A descent towards the sea coast; a small town ahead of us, which for the moment looked a collection of roofs and nothing more; a nearer approach revealing a very picturesque and quaint little town, with streets and shops that seemed quite to eclipse the capital; a quiet air of prosperity; gardens full of roses; a quaint church upon a hill, and a graveyard literally flower laden; an hotel partly covered with ivy, well organised, and owned by the most charming and delightful landlady in the world, whose manners and appearance were too refined for the task of receiving and satisfying all sorts and conditions of travellers; a harbour and pier before the windows, and the glorious sea stretching beyond. Such was Svanike, and we felt that for that evening our lines had again fallen in pleasant places.



RUNIC STONES.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

A True Incident of the Irish Troubles.

PEOPLE say there is no such thing as liberality among the Scotch, truth amongst the Welsh, or loyalty amongst the Irish. Of the Scotch and Welsh I have no personal knowledge, and I cannot believe so sweeping an accusation, but I do know something as to the loyalty of the Irish. Loyalty, I mean, not to the Crown, but to their employers.

One incident in my usually quiet life brings out so strongly the devotion of an Irish girl to her mistress that I cannot help thinking there will be both interest and profit in the story, even told in the simple way that I am able to relate it.

In the year 1881, I, being then a slip of a girl of eighteen, living in a quiet Devonshire home, was wooed and married. My husband was a captain in a line regiment, and, shortly after our marriage, his battalion being ordered to Ireland, I, of course, went with him. No sense of danger ever troubled me, for as long as he was with me what had I to fear?

On arriving in Ireland my husband's company was sent on detachment to an insignificant little village rejoicing in the name of Ballyboreen. The small barrack the soldiers were quartered in afforded no accommodation for me. I did not require much room, but here there was absolutely none. There was no hotel or inn of any description in the place above the rank of a beer-shop, so that when Hugh was told of a small house about three quarters of a mile from the barracks, which was advertised to be let furnished, we went to inspect it, and finally settled down there.

Myrtle Cottage, as it was called, was a pretty, two-storied house, covered with creepers, standing on rather high ground overlooking a stream, which the natives of these parts delighted in dignifying by the name of river. The cottage stood completely alone; there was no other building of any sort within half a mile of it in any direction.

We lived at Myrtle Cottage with great contentment for several months. Our household consisted of two servants. An elderly woman was cook, whose name was O'Shea, and who seemed a quiet, hard-working woman. She seldom entered into conversation with me, but on the few occasions on which we had any talk together outside household matters she tried to give me an impression of the past glories of the O'Sheas, and once or twice hinted darkly that there would be a good time coming yet, when the reign of the Sassenachs should be over. I was not much interested in her, and only laughed at her fancies.

As housemaid we had a young girl named Nelly Farren, an

exceedingly pretty, bright, and pleasant girl. She was engaged to a son of a neighbouring farmer, one Tim Doolan, of whom she prattled to me on the least encouragement. He was rather above her in position, but Nelly was so pleasant and pretty that his father and mother had not the heart to put a veto on the match, and only made it a condition that she should try to save a little money in service before they set up housekeeping together. Besides these two women servants, my husband's soldier-servant was employed about the house, but the cottage was so small that there was no bed-room for him, and he had to sleep in an outhouse. He was a stolid Englishman with little in common with the Irish people about him.

It was a disagreeable time for soldiers in Ireland then, for they were often called upon to assist the civil police at evictions, or in dispersing some traitorous or seditious meeting.

Much as my husband disliked this kind of work it had to be done. Unfortunately, one day when his company was helping the police in evicting a small farmer who would not pay any rent, he was called upon by the magistrate to fire on the crowd. One volley was quite enough to disperse them, but that one volley had severely wounded one of the foremost men among the assembled land-leaguers.

This man, Pat Henessy by name, was so seriously hurt that he was believed by his companions to have been killed, and the man who picked him up, before carrying him away, turned to my husband and with a threatening look and gesture, said: "The year won't be out till ye'll rue this day's work."

I did not of course hear this at the time, but subsequent events recalled the matter to Hugh's mind and he then told me about it.

For another month our life went on uneventfully, and then my husband received orders to march the greater part of his company to a place some ten miles away. This would involve his remaining out all night; he could not hope to return before the following afternoon.

It was our first separation, and though I tried to make light of it, I could not get over a sense of impending trouble. I was horribly afraid, though I knew not of what. But I did my best to hide all sign of alarm from my husband, and laughed at the idea of feeling nervous.

I made the best of it, and Hugh started off early in the afternoon.

I kept my tears back until he had left the house, and then broke down; but soon rallying myself for being so foolish, I called Nelly to come out with me for a little into the garden. We stood on the slope of the hill, looking down on the village, less than a mile away. In this lonely place it was some comfort to think that there were some English soldiers left in the barracks.

Between us and the village rushed the little river, now in full flood, for there had been heavy rains that autumn. A little pathway, hardly more than a sheep track, led direct from Myrtle Cottage into

the village and close up to the barracks. This track crossed the river by what was usually a very shallow ford, but now, in the swollen state of the stream, was hardly a ford at all. The regular road led by a circuit of about a quarter of a mile to an old stone bridge, and so into the village.

Nelly looking into my face saw that I had been crying, and tried to comfort me by saying:

"Don't be onaisy, ma'am! sure the last words the masther said to me just now was, 'Take care of your mistress, Nelly,' and it's myself that will do that same to the last drop of my blood. 'Twill be no time at all, ma'am, till he is back again. I'll make you a good cup of tay, and if ye'll go to bed airly, ma'am, ye'll sleep as sound as a child."

Getting some little comfort from the bright, cheerful look of her sweet face, I turned into the house again, determined to make myself as busy as possible to pass away the time rapidly, till I could reasonably hope to get to sleep.

Before it became quite dark I looked carefully to all the locks and fastenings of the doors and windows, and ascertained that the soldier servant was in his room. I went to bed early, recommended the servants to retire also, and was soon, notwithstanding a nervous feeling, fast asleep.

I was awakened—it seemed to me almost immediately, though I afterwards ascertained that it was at one o'clock—by a confused murmur of voices outside the house and the trampling of many feet. I arose in terror, and just then Nelly rushed into my room, her face as white as a sheet.

"Oh, mistress, what will we do! what will we do! The Laguers are upon us," she exclaimed.

I hardly understood her at first, but soon made out that a crowd of land leaguers had surrounded the house and were prepared to attack it. Why, I could not imagine, but was soon to learn.

I put on some clothes as quickly as possible, and tried to decide what I ought to do. My only hope lay in the soldier servant. I took Nelly with me and crept to a window at the back of the house which looked on the outhouses, from which I hoped to see into the man's room, and perhaps communicate with him.

To my horror I saw that he on whom we depended for protection was lying bound hand and foot in the back-yard, and two villainous-looking men, with blackened faces and torches in their hands, were standing over him. All hope of any succour from him was out of the question.

The only thing to be done now was to brace up our courage, speak to the men, try to find out what they wanted, and how best I could conciliate them.

I went back to my bedroom window, threw up the sash, and, leaning out a little, gazed on the strange scene before me.

There were perhaps a hundred men assembled in the little garden.

The flame of half a dozen torches threw a lurid and uncertain light over the restless crowd. More than half of the men's faces were blackened, and many of them carried bludgeons. I could not be sure whether there were any firearms, but fancied I could distinguish the gleam of a gun barrel here and there in the torch light.

"What do you all want?" I called out as loudly as I could. "My husband is not here. Why do you come in this way and frighten us defenceless women in the middle of the night?"

"Shure we know that," cried a harsh voice out of the crowd. "We know the captain is away on the divil's business; but we owe him one for shooting Pat Henessy, and we're going to take it out of you in revenge. Come out here till we talk to ye."

"Oh, mistress," cried Nelly, "shut down the window or they'll shoot you."

Seeing I was doing no good by talking to them, I closed and fastened the window, and retired with Nelly inside the room.

"What are we to do now?" I whispered.

"There is only one thing, ma'am: I must creep out and go across to the barracks and bring the sojers. Keep a good heart, mistress, dear, and I'll be back in no time. I'll go right across the stream, and sure it's less than a mile. Put me out at the drawing-room window, through the glass room where the flowers do be, and ye'll fasten it up again safe, and sure no one will know anything till I get back."

I went down stairs with her quietly and without a light, softly opened the window into the conservatory and let her out.

"'Tis little my life will be worth if they catch a sight of me," said she, "but 'tis our only chance, and I promised the master I would take care of ye. May the blessed Virgin protect me! Good-bye, mistress, dear. Ye'll tell the master I did my best, if so be as they catch me."

Before she passed through the outer door she turned to me and whispered: "Don't put too much trust in Mrs. O'Shea, ma'am; I wouldn't."

"What do you mean, Nelly?" I said. "Why can't she be trusted?"

"I wouldn't trust none who has a son among them moonlighters."

And then she passed into the darkness. Luckily she had on a dark dress, and was hardly visible in the gloom of the night. I fastened up the door and window securely, and went back into the house trembling with fear. Nelly's last words had frightened me more than anything else. I had now absolutely no one to trust to for protection, or even counsel.

The next half hour was a time of agony. Every moment I fancied the ruffians outside were about to break into the house. They might have done so at any minute, but fortunately for me I had friends even among that crowd. I overheard a few words which showed me that there was disagreement amongst them.

"Come, lads! 'tis fooling we are; we must get her out anny way; so break in the door. With a will, now!"

"Stop, boys, stop!" called out another voice; "ye must remember Nelly is in there, and she is not to be hurt; mind that now. Begorra! I'll be the death of the first man that lays a finger on her."

I could hear no more distinctly, but amongst the confused noise the voice of the man who had spoken of Nelly sounded hard and threatening. I concluded that this must be Nelly's lover, Tim Doolan, and it comforted me a little to think there might be some assistance to be hoped for from him.

Every now and then the night air would resound with a wild yell, and deep curses were called down upon the head of my absent husband.

The minutes passed on slowly, but I tried to comfort myself with the thought that rescue might yet come in time. I then bethought me of Mrs. O'Shea. She would probably be in the kitchen. I went in to look. She must have gone upstairs. I went up noiselessly, and looked into the servants' room; she was not there. I went on quickly to my bedroom, and stood at the door peering into the darkness. I heard someone moving, and knew it must be the cook. She passed round the bed to the other side, where stood always a little table on which I had placed all my keys when I went to bed, amongst them the key of the front door, which I had taken upstairs for greater security.

I saw the woman strike a match. She only allowed it to burn for five or six seconds, but in that time I saw her put out her hand and take up the big front-door key. What could she want with it? I held my breath, and kept every faculty at its highest tension. She moved quietly and quickly to the window, against the pane of which the key in her hand rattled as she threw up the sash.

All of a sudden I understood her motive. She meant to throw out the key of the front door, and so let the men in. My mind was made up on the instant. I watched her narrowly until I saw that my opportunity had come.

As soon as she had opened the window, she leant out over the sill and called in a low tone:

"Larry, the kay; the kay of the door: open it ye'rself but never say it was me."

As she swung her hand back, before throwing out the key, I sprang forward, snatched it away, and lifting her up sharply by the feet, sent her by a great effort of strength out of the window.

It seemed a terrible act, but what was I to do? In the hands of this strong and determined woman I should have been powerless. Once she found herself discovered it would have been her life against mine. The act, terrible as it seemed, I have always looked upon as a sort of inspiration. She fell on the soft turf beneath, and perhaps was almost as much frightened as hurt. I may mention here that I

never saw or heard of her again. She left the neighbourhood, and it was supposed was conveyed by her friends to America.

As the time passed slowly on and still they did not actually break into the house my courage rose again. Surely, I thought, the soldiers will soon be here—if Nelly only got safe away.

I took up my station close to the door of the conservatory, ready to let Nelly in if she returned, and waited anxiously from minute to minute. At last, peering out into the darkness, I made out a figure stealing quietly up through the bushes. I saw that it was certainly the figure of a woman, and felt it must be Nelly.

As she came close up I was about to open the door to let her in when there was a flash of light followed instantaneously by the report of a gun close by, and the girl fell heavily at the threshold of the door.

Forgetting all precautions I sprang out, and in an instant had the girl in my arms, for it was indeed poor Nelly. She was in horrible agony, but she just managed to gasp out:

"The sogers are here, mistress; you are saved. Tell the master I saved you."

I was about to try and carry her into the house, when a man sprang out of the bushes close by, calling out, in an agony of voice I shall never forget, "Is it Nelly I've shot?" and flung himself on the ground in a transport of grief and horror. At the same instant the tramp of many feet moving at a fast pace was heard, and the word of command given to "Fix bayonets." I realised that I was saved; and the cowardly crowd outside, crying out: "The sogers! the polis!" dispersed in all directions.

Tim Doolan—for it was indeed he who had fired the shot—helped me to carry Nelly into the house. We laid her on a sofa, and did all we could think of for her. Tim then told me, with many exclamations of grief and distress, that on Nelly's account he had determined to try and prevent anyone getting into the house. He knew that the conservatory door was the weakest place, and was watching that when he saw a figure stealing up, and evidently going to enter. It was so dark that he could not distinguish the figure; had no idea it was a woman's; and he believed, of course, that Nelly was inside with me. He fired deliberately, with the intention of stopping that person from entering; fired with such fatal aim that she he loved best, and would have died to save, was dying by his hand.

We sent one of the police for a doctor, but he could not hope to bring him under half an hour. Even if he had been on the spot he could not have saved her life.

She spoke but little. Once she turned to me. "I did my best, mistress, didn't I?"

With bitter tears I assured her, over and over again, she had done as noble a deed as any man or woman that ever had lived, and that her memory should be held in sacred reverence by me and Hugh for all time.

"Good-bye, mistress, dear," she whispered.

I kissed the gentle face passionately, and went into another room, that she and her lover might say their long farewell with no outsider to interfere.

I sought out the sergeant in charge of the detachment of soldiers and gave him a few directions, and when I returned to Nelly's sofa, five minutes later, the faithful soul had passed to the God who gave it. Surely there was a rich reward in store somewhere for that true heart, "Faithful unto death."

Tim's grief and distress were most painful to witness, and I could not in any way help him, or attempt to give him consolation; so I left him to watch over the quiet form on the sofa, and tried to get some rest myself. Now that I was safe, and the need for bracing up my courage was over, the reaction came, and I passed from one fit of hysterics into another, till the poor troubled sergeant of the detachment thought, I believe, that I should certainly die.

However, he did the very best thing he could. He sent down into the village to the wife of the Head Constable of the police, and begged her to come up and take charge of me. She came, and never left me for a moment till the happy time came when, late in the afternoon, I was able to pour out all the story of my troubles, fears, and perils in the strong arms of him from whom I trusted I might never again be parted.

A NIGHT IN COLINDIA.

IT was very wrong, rash and illegal, nevertheless we did it. I wouldn't do it again, for I am certain that night has shortened my life, and if I narrate here a few of the incidents we met with it is simply as a warning to any of my readers against leaving the beaten paths of everyday life and virtue.

Will Purvis is my dearest friend; socially he is a solicitor's clerk in a north county town which shall be called Blank. For the same obvious reasons the name I have given him is not to be found in his certificate of birth. My own name is—well, Norval Shepherd, and I am in the principal bank in the town.

I don't remember how it first arose. I know we were very busy in our respective callings, and dare not on any account ask for a holiday; but that was not all. I am afraid I must confess that what gave rise to our adventure was (now I look back upon it) a most contemptible spirit of bravado, fostered by the taunts and chaff of a select circle of feather-brained friends. At any rate we pledged ourselves to see all that could be seen of the Colonial Exhibition in London between that present day, Tuesday, and the following Thursday without leaving our work for a single hour. Of course it was understood that we must try and see it by night.

I had not been in London for years, and Will had never been there in his life.

On Wednesday I could always leave at four, and on that particular Wednesday Will had to leave the office at three, to see a client at some distance, and bring his instructions to the office the next day. He arranged to hurry over this, and then take the train on from the village where his client lived to the first stopping station of the London express. Here I was to pick him up.

At a few minutes past five, therefore, that Wednesday afternoon I was speeding South with two return tickets to London in my pocket, two small dark lanterns, and a good supply of matches.

At N—— Will turned up all right, and in the wildest of spirits. He had succeeded in his negotiations, and was certain to be highly praised by his firm.

It was after eight o'clock when we were rattling across London, and twenty-five minutes to nine when we passed through the turnstiles at the Albert Hall; the ticket collector raising his eyebrows when we paid at that hour five shillings for admittance.

"Norval," said Will, as soon as we got in—he was quite dazed by our rattle across town—"look at those Christys. I didn't know they had negro minstrels and such low things here. Aren't you surprised?"

Then, by the aid of an official guide and programme I had bought,

I explained to him that these were some of the West Indian subjects, and had no connection with burnt cork and popular melodies and public entertainments.

We trotted round the corridor to the steps leading to the conservatory.

"Mary!" gasped Will.

"Mary? what Mary?" I said, startled beyond measure, for I thought he had recognised an acquaintance, that our game was up, our wager lost, and our anticipated fun also. "What Mary?"

"Mary Stuart," cried Will, laughing at the fright he had given me. "Mary, who was supposed to have been beheaded ages ago."

And certainly at the head of the stairs the vision of the girl who was selling cigars—thanks to her hair, and the remarkable Stuart headgear—proved no bad imitation of the unfortunate Scottish Queen.

Turning just then into the corridor we saw another announcement: "Dinner, 7*s.* 6*d.* each."

"I must have something, Norval," cried Will. "I cannot walk another step on my present airy condition. And think of what we have before us."

"Well," I said, "we'll turn in and look at the place. Perhaps it is not too late for dinner." So in we went and peered about us, and then marched up to a young man who sat at a desk on the left, with a book containing a multitude of names and addresses of people who evidently had been dining there. We found that the lateness of the hour rather favoured us, as earlier in the evening they informed us we should not have found vacant places. As it was, we got a capital table overlooking the grounds, and, remembering the night before us, rather astonished our particular waiter by our ideas of a 7*s.* 6*d.* dinner, which evidently were very different from his.

We had just finished our fish when the whole gardens outside, hitherto lighted only by the silvery moon, burst into a blaze of lamps, twinkling like coloured glow-worms from branch and leaf, and turf; lamps outlining the whole buildings, clusters of lamps in the air and the ground everywhere, dazzling and brilliant in the extreme. But why speak of that which all know? I must hurry on. At a quarter to ten we had finished an excellent cup of tea, pocketed a couple of rolls, and sallied out into the grounds, feeling like giants refreshed.

The crowd was still very dense, and we had great difficulty in making our way along to the main block of buildings across the gardens. At the entrance, where the crowd was streaming in, on their way out of the exhibition, I suppose, we were rather discouraged by the apparition of a burly policeman and a sharp looking official labelled "Colind" on his cap, who was making terrible havoc of the cigars, allowing no lights to pass.

"Norval," whispered Will, "I don't like the look of that man. I hope we may get out of this all right. I rather wish we hadn't come up."

The smiling faces of the girls behind the refreshment counter, however, soon reassured us in spite of their hideous dress, evidently the original costume of the "now extinct" female beefeater: black shaded with yellow, like wasps.

Only five minutes more, and we should be locked in. We walked along at hap-hazard and got among a lot of huge Canadian threshing machines.

"Here we are, Norval. Up you go," said Will, darting between two of them.

I followed in an instant. Not a soul was within sight. In a moment we had climbed into the hopper of one of the largest. Two minutes after, all the lights went out like one man, and the scene was changed. Instead of the cheerfully illuminated galleries and corridors, we were in ghost-land. The fantastic shapes of these huge machines stood out in weird outline in the moonlight, while an artistic arrangement of the saucepans and frying-pans shone like burnished silver on the wall.

"Rather an awkward place this, when the machinery is in motion, Norval."

"Yes, I'm afraid you and I would come out all chaff," I replied, in a whisper.

"Excepting my corn, Norval, which I'll thank you not to stand on," said Will, drily. "How long do we stop here?"

"We needn't stay here at all, and we must keep a sharp look-out," I said, "and steer clear of the night watchmen."

We crept down and peered along the shed. All was silent, so we stepped out like two tabbies, pretending to admire the frying-pans, but really shaking in our shoes. We were not afraid, only a little cold.

We grew more hardened after a while. At the bottom of the room the moon was shining full on a hideous mannikin, life-size, with only one eye, that gave me a fresh attack of the shudders. Long galleries stretched to right and left in patches of silvery light and sombre shade. And the beating of our own hearts was the only sound we heard; and we didn't hear that—we felt it. The fact is we were in a highly nervous state with the tea we had had, and not only felt increasingly shy of the watchman but also of the things in the rooms, so magnified and distorted by the moonlight.

"What in the world is that, Norval?" said Will, in a stage whisper, clutching my arm. "It's like a huge grasshopper."

Certainly the creature, which was at least three feet high, looked as if it was just going to spring.

"If it is a Colonial grasshopper it's dead," I said, bravely. "Come on, Will." And I marched up to the hideous insect, which developed into a new-fangled machine for learning to swim. Another fright pleasantly disposed of. One of the most lively effects, and which rewarded us for all our fright, was the view of the street of Old London by moonlight. It was the real thing. You could just imagine you were taking a moonlight stroll along Cheapside during

the plague, all was so still and deserted. The gates reminded me forcibly of one at Constance, with John Huss's house hard by.

We were just walking through it, when we heard a foot-fall approaching. We pushed open a low door and crouched inside behind a counter, while through the gateway and away down the street we had just come up, with a swinging glass lantern and stick in his hand, and a soft felt hat on his head, passed one of the night watchmen.

We felt agitated, we couldn't tell why, at the sight of this being, and became more so when the first thing that met us on entering the Indian house opposite was a ghastly female figure in red pointing her skinny brown finger right at us as much as to say: "I see you, Will Burns and Norval Shepherd; your names shall appear to-morrow in all the papers, and you shall both be ruined for your mad freak."

Seriously, I think we should have deserved it.

We couldn't see much of the exhibition, of course, but we should have seen much more than we did only we were so nervous. We weren't frightened, only we felt nervous; we thought it was the tea after that *7s. 6d.* dinner. Tea does make one nervous.

We came upon a dish full of little rolls of butter.

"Here's a lucky find," said Will, taking out a piece of newspaper; "they'll help our dry bread down when early breakfast time comes." But when we came to touch, they turned out to be nothing but silk cocoons. Not a fright this time, but a disappointment.

The Indian court was well lighted by the moon, and we could see the smallest objects in the cases. At the top, I was just peering into the Indian jungle when I felt a cold hand touch my face.

"Don't do that, Will," I said, starting back. "You know I'm nervous."

"I didn't touch you," returned Will. "I wasn't near you."

I looked in once more, but oh, the thrill that went through me as I felt the fingers on my cheek again. It wasn't Will; he had moved further off. I put up my hand, and touched a cold face within a foot of mine. I smothered a yell, and shuddered quietly.

"Who are you?" I asked, sotto voce.

"What's up, Norval?" said Will; but I couldn't move or speak. He had lighted his lantern and turned it into the dark spot where I stood, and revealed—an Indian figure that, with hideous cunning, had been put standing in front of the glass in such a way as to touch anyone looking into the case.

"Come along," I said, regaining my voice. "I don't think this is an interesting place at all."

Just then the watchman's footstep coming up the Indian court was heard. We did not run, but we advanced rapidly, Will first, into a shallow pond that had been carelessly made right in the middle of the floor in a part that was pitch dark. We got wet up to our knees, and made a great splashing, our hearts, as usual, in our mouths. However, out we scrambled, and hurried along on the matting (where

our wet boots left no track) to a line of carriages. We found a door unlocked and got in.

"Home," said Will to the imaginary driver.

"Lie well back," I said; "he's coming up this way."

And surely enough he did.

The pond was still very wavy, which decidedly puzzled him. He looked at it, walked round it twice, and then looked at it again with his lantern.

"Curious," he must have thought, "these Indian ponds can't stand our cold nights; no wonder they shiver a bit."

He walked straight past the shafts of our carriage; we crouched down between the seats.

When the danger was over, we set to work on our rolls and my flask, and at last sallied forth, somewhat revived, exactly as a clock near struck midnight.

In spite of the hour we didn't feel quite so nervous, and enjoyed ourselves considerably for some time, not only in inspecting the remarkable collection from the West Indian and other small colonies, but quite as much in walking slowly along after our friend, the night watchman, and assisting him in seeing all safe and sound.

Had we been more nervous, the hideous groups of natives, life-size, would certainly have disconcerted us. As it was, we were only amused by the ruffian with a small suet chopper hanging from his nose, and the more refined savage with the shark's teeth in his ears and round his neck.

We passed more than one trophy of fruit, at which we cast loving glances, while an enormous pile of biscuits, behind glass, also interested us in spite of our rolls. We didn't feel greedy, but only curious to know the flavour of colonial biscuits. A refreshment counter finally overcame us; we left the watchman and stepped inside. I think the rolls only whetted our appetites, and an unusual amount of exercise had had the effect of making the quadrant dinner a matter of history. We sat down behind the counter by the side of a range of glass jars full of sponge cakes, bath-buns, and other delights. At our feet was unlimited lemonade, bottled beer, &c.

"Now what about this, Norval? I must have something, but I don't like stealing."

"Pay for it, then, like a man, Will. Let's see. Two bottles of beer sixpence, six sponge cakes sixpence, four bath-buns eightpence."

"And sandwiches," said Will.

"Six ham—they are ham—sandwiches, one shilling; total two and eightpence. Here it is, before we begin. I'll put it on this ledger, where it will be seen. Now we can go ahead with a clear conscience." And we did at last get outside the whole eighteen articles.

It was now after two o'clock. For the first time we felt thoroughly happy, and set out over again to make the most of what remained of

the moonlight. As we approached one of the monster dining-rooms of the place, we again heard the watchman.

"There's more than one coming," said Will, as we crouched behind a huge stuffed fish.

"They sound like a whole regiment; a dozen at least," I said, as we heard the compact tramp of many feet stepping very lightly. As, however, it did not get nearer, but kept going on, our curiosity got the better of us, and we rose and looked round the corner.

What a sight! Across the floor, in the moonlight, disappearing by a hole at the dining-room, was a living stream of rats. Huge grey ones, sleek brown ones, some nearly black. It was evidently one of their noted restaurants. I never saw so many rats before.

Unfortunately, just beside us on a stand was a pile of small brass gods from Burmah. I knew it was wrong, but it was the only damage we did during the whole night, and the temptation was irresistible. Seized with the same impulse, we caught up two and hurled them at the rats.

What a commotion. Squealing, running in all directions. Never did those two idols strike such terror before.

But instead of following up their advantage, the two little gods lay still on the floor, and one wise old rat stole softly up and felt first one and then the other with his whiskers, then trotted slowly off. Soon he brought back more, and in another minute the rats were running over our gods as if they were two stones lying in the way. So much for familiarity. No one shall get too familiar with me. Looking down the gallery we saw a star shining like an electric light near the floor of the building.

"They've forgotten to turn that out," said Will. "Did you ever see such a light? It can't be our friend's lantern."

"It may be a hole, and light coming through," I replied, advancing cautiously. The nearer we got the brighter it shone, sending a perfect stream of rays towards us.

We began to feel the tea working again in our terror, but still we crept on, when unmistakable steps behind compelled us to go faster; and thus urged on from the rear, we found it was the huge glass eye of a gigantic sword fish sparkling in the moon. We got behind a piano near, and saw *two* of our enemies approaching. Something had evidently roused their suspicions, for they were talking earnestly and swinging their lanterns in every direction.

"If they had only a dog it would be all up," whispered Will.

"Something wrong inside here, Marston," said one watchman to the other. "Them idols cannot move of themselves, I'll warrant."

"If I catch any thieving rascal in here," responded the ferocious Marston in blood-curdling tones, "I'll make short work with him, whoever he is."

"Whoever is in will stop in, Marston, that's certain. I've seen

to every door, so there's no way out. We'll come across him afore morning."

"Blue look out," cried Will. "There they go. Wait till they're out of hearing, and then we'll have a tune."

In spite of all my entreaties, Will opened the piano, and, regardless of the risk, while I held the lantern, played with one thumb, "God save the Queen," as near the top of the piano as he could.

I kept listening intently, and at last heard steps in the distance.

"We must fly; quick, Will; come along." And away we went behind some large curtains a short distance off.

Then we stopped and listened. All was still again.

At last—No—Yes, there certainly was someone at the piano.

The watchman had discovered it full open, and appeared feebly trying to remember the scales of his youth.

"Of all the players I ever heard," said Will——

"Hush, listen. He's going in for variations."

"It's a Moonlight Sonata of his own," returned Will.

The noise was dreadful. Half a dozen notes at hap-hazard appeared to be struck anywhere on the keyboard.

Slowly working our way round as the playing still continued, we at last reached a point where we could see the front of the instrument. No one was there! The sonata, however, was going on furiously. One could imagine a phantom Rubinstein, with twenty-four fingers on each hand, careering over the notes, but none could be seen.

"I have it," said Will, darting forward, and before I could catch him he ran to the piano with my stick and dealt a savage blow at the notes. A hideous squeal and all was still.

"Here, Norval, quick! there's half a dozen of them."

I rushed up. Rats again. One lying dead on the keyboard, the others had disappeared.

"They are a gay family, these town rats. Fancy going in for sonatas, Norval! However, if this row doesn't bring all the beadles about here in five minutes I shall be surprised. In any case we'll inspect another part."

I think we walked for half an hour to the most remote portion of the building before we halted again in front of a squatter's hut.

On a bench was a basin of water; a towel and a piece of soap lay near.

"I'll have a wash, Norval. You keep watch."

So Will gave himself a good polish, for we had accumulated a lot of dust in hiding behind pianos and curtains, and I followed suit.

We then tried to get into the hut but the door was fast, so we got in through a window. Two comfortable couches lay along the wall covered with rugs.

"Fasten that window, Norval, and we'll just have a nap to wind up with. I'm tired of sight-seeing."

closed the shutter, and secured it with a wooden button.

Only forty winks," said Will; "we must get out of this by five, and it's now four."

"All right, old fellow. I shan't sleep many minutes."

I lay down resolving not to sleep at all, as I was not sure of Will. I did just close my eyes—it seemed for a moment—and must have dozed off, for I remember thinking I was in the bank after hours, and a crowd of people were battling at the doors trying to get in. A confused hum of angry voices was heard outside the windows, and I sat at the desk and listened.

"There's someone in there," I heard a woman saying.

"Gracious!" said another; "is there?"

"Oh, look, look, mother! a man—two men."

I opened my eyes. Just above me, looking through the window, which had been pushed open, was a small boy with a red face and a huge white collar.

The situation flashed upon me in an instant; also our deadly peril. We had overslept ourselves, and missed our train! It was broad daylight and after ten, for here were the visitors. I flatter myself I never displayed greater presence of mind than at that instant. I woke Will, who started up, and put my finger on my mouth, which he understood, and looked out of the window. Only a couple of old ladies—a chance yet.

"In a moment, ma'am," said I, unbarring the door, "and you may walk in. This is a real squatter's hut. My chum and me brought it from Wagga Wagga, and for twenty years we never slept in any other." The ladies and the rosy boy walked in.

"What hard beds," they said.

"Very hard ma'am; but hard work and hard beds suit each other. My chum here," I said, "has overslept himself, this morning; been up late last night, or the door would have been open for you."

The ladies were much gratified.

Other visitors now came up; but we had saved ourselves, and feeling very uneasy at the consequences of our long sleep, we quietly walked through the galleries to the nearest door, passing the sword-fish, now looking benign, and the refreshment stall (our stall) now embellished with the female beefeater, doubtless with our two shillings and eightpence in her pocket. Last of all we met, face to face, the night watchman who had dogged us all night. "Good-bye, Marston," said Will, affably.

"Good-bye, sir," said the man, raising his hat in blank astonishment.

We got home that afternoon, and, fortunately, though we lost our wager we did not lose our respective situations, which we richly deserved to do.

"THE KING OF THE BIRDS."

An Incident in the Captivity of Louis XVII.

Day by day on the turret stones
The sunbeams shone or raindrops fell
Through all the days in a hundred years:
And the raindrops loved the place so well
That they hollowed a bed in the cold grey wall,
And made for themselves a tiny lake,
Clear and cool, where the passing birds
Lingered a little their thirst to slake.

Day by day up the turret stairs
Wearily toiled a little lad,
Guilty of bearing a royal name,
Dwelling a prisoner lone and sad.
Never a joy in life he knew,
Save for a while in the long dull day,
To climb the stairs to the prison wall,
And watch the sparrows so free and gay.

"My birds," he called them; and very soon
Fearless they fluttered about his feet;
And the boy would listen with wistful eyes
To their happy twitter, low but sweet.
They learnt to come at the gentle call
Of the king who had neither crown nor throne;
And the child kept court on the turret wall,
With only the birds his sway to own.

But the small feet grew too tired to climb
The long steep stairs to the turret grey;
The birds for their ruler looked in vain,
And their song was sad as they flew away.
The winter came and the birds were gone,
The snow on the prison fell thick and fast;
But Death had opened the prison door,
"The King of the Birds" was free at last.

Florence Tylee.

M. L. GOW. J. SWAIN.

"I POISONED HIM!"

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1886.

LADY VALERIA.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHAT LIONEL DE CRESSY SAW IN THE CHURCHYARD.

"MR. PARAMOUNT wishes to speak to you, sir," announced Mrs. Goodliffe, with no good will, as she admitted her master on his return, late and weary, from the parish round that had occupied him from the time of his parting from Oliver Meynell. "And dinner has been waiting this hour," she added, despondently.

"It's no use asking Mr. Paramount to dinner. Bring some tea as soon as you can," Eustace suggested, passing on to the study. The severe air of distant politeness that the little old gentleman reserved expressly for his Vicar, had given place to limp dejection, relieved by a dash of defiance at intervals.

"I'm in trouble," he began, with a sudden effort. "I don't say it's of your causing, because I object to making a statement incapable of proof. I don't expect you to be sorry for it. I wouldn't come here to ask your pity for myself. I am aware that in your eyes I have been for long an inconvenient worm that must be crushed and trampled out of the way, and I make no objection. It's for my little girl I want your help. *She's* always been devoted enough to you to satisfy you, sir."

"Elsie? Is she ill? I am indeed sorry ——"

"Not in body. She's better and stronger than she has been for years. She can walk quite a distance now. It's her mind, sir, that's ailing; and as I'm of no account in her eyes, I've come to see what you can do. Maybe she'll tell you more than she will me," in a tone of angry suspicion, which the Vicar let pass.

"I wish I could help her. I wish Mrs. Damien were at home. It may be a case for womanly help and counsel, not for the interference of us clumsy, uncomprehending men."

"Maybe so. If my poor Emmy had lived—perhaps I haven't

been so careful of her as I ought. She's a good girl, and not a week ago was singing over her work like a little bird, and I—not being in spirits myself—was sharp with her, but she never answered back. She doesn't sing now."

"Do you think a little change or company —— ?"

"When I said I'd get a holiday and take her away, she fell a crying and begged me not. I'm fairly at my wits' end." And the poor man rubbed his head distractedly.

"What has become of her friend—her fellow-lodger ?"

"Mrs. Beltran ? Gone away with her husband. They've been to see Elsie since, and had her to spend the day and go sight-seeing. It mayn't have been good for her ; may have set her murmuring at her lowly station."

The Vicar might have asked some questions more, but that the door was flung open to admit de Cressy, followed by Mrs. Goodliffe, with her tea-tray, at sight of which Mr. Paramount would have risen and fled, had not de Cressy insisted on relating an astounding School Board anecdote which he was bound to hear and discuss. De Cressy was always solemnly exempted by the old gentleman from the commination pronounced by him on all the doings at St. Fridolin's—partly as being youthful and irresponsible—mainly on account of his connection with a firm which he held in the deepest respect. A relative of Meynell Meynell and Mott could not for certain go very far astray.

Lionel made a few remarks on yesterday's expedition, not feeling exactly satisfied as to his own share therein.

"Do you know if the Archdales stay long in town?" Eustace asked suddenly, thinking of entreating Hester's help for Elsie.

"I am not sure. Why, here is Miss Archdale !" and three surprised faces greeted Hester, as she tripped in, followed by Sir John.

She laughed merrily. "My visit is to Mrs. Goodliffe. Have you discovered your loss yet ?"

The old lady looked up from her tray, which she was busily rearranging with extra tea-cups.

"Mine, Miss Hester ? Why no ! Law ! If it isn't my raincloak ! Why where *did* it come from ? Then whose did I bring home last night ? "

"You and my mother exchanged, it appears, but you left your purse in the pocket. Yes, indeed, there it is. Mother would not have slept to-night if I hadn't thought of coming here at once with it."

"Think of that ! I *am* ashamed. I am indeed. You take sugar, Miss ? And Sir John ? "

Hester sat down by Mr. Paramount, speaking softly and kindly to him about Elsie, till he almost forgot that he was breaking bread in the house of his enemy ; while Eustace wondered at the quaint turn of chance that brought him to share two meals in one day with the two people in all the world most unfriendly to him.

So they sat round the wide open window in the soft evening light, clear and warm, though moonless, talking or listening to de Cressy's account of the humours of the Foresters' Fête and the village concert, till Hester rose to go.

"I want to ask you something first," she said to the Curate, who was accompanying them to the door. "I will not detain you long."

Sir John lingered behind, and they stepped out together and passed through the churchyard gate.

"Jock overheard something he was not intended to listen to the other day. Something you said to Fräulein Klitz—about a friend of mine—Mr. Poynter. Do you mind telling me what it was?"

"Miss Archdale—I *couldn't!*—— To think of your coming to ask me that question here, of all places!"

"Why here? And why is it something I may not hear? He is dead, I know." Her lips quivered and her eyes grew appealing. "You cannot have worse news to tell me."

It was not in de Cressy to resist her; he looked slightly embarrassed for a moment though.

"It was nothing worth telling after all—not to do any good that is—and you'll be only laughing at me, maybe, when you hear it. Fräulein Klitz didn't, but she's credulous and sentimental, and I couldn't help telling her; it came out somehow in our conversation the other night."

"What came out, and what makes you think I could do such a thing as laugh—*laugh!*" The word came out with a half-sob.

"It was this. That same night the poor fellow disappeared I saw him, Miss Archdale, as plainly as I see you, standing on these very flags, late at night, in the full light of the moon."

"Saw him—and you have told no one? The police——"

"Let me tell you how it was. You know at that time we had no thought of what was going to happen to him, of what *had* happened to him, I firmly believe. It was the night of our weekly practice here. Half-past seven to half-past nine—and a very good one it had been—there's a great deal of real musical talent going about here, believe it or not. Well, maybe we had stayed a trifle beyond our time, and it might be ten o'clock by the time everyone had gone, and young Rendall and I had put the things up and the room to rights, and turned the lights out. You see the gate over there"—pointing to the old archway in the far corner at the head of the little flight of steps—"that's supposed to be locked every night, but for the convenience of one or two of us it had been left open till the practice was over, and I sent Rendall across with the key to lock it. I stood at the window watching him, for it was as light as day, and as he disappeared by the west end of the church, I saw a figure come slowly round the east side. I thought it was some loiterer, and watched him, meaning to send Rendall after him when he came back. Then I suddenly recognised him. It was Mr. Poynter, though how I came to know it—or why

he should be there—I could not say. He crossed the churchyard slowly, his head bent, to that great stone you see under the plane-tree, and sat down."

"Why didn't you go out to him?"

"Why should I?" was the not unnatural answer. "I waited to see what he would do next. In a minute or two he rose and came on here, right up to the window."

"Oh!" Hester caught his arm impulsively. "And then?"

"He stood looking full into my face, Miss Archdale, with no more sight in his eyes than the dead. He might have been walking in his sleep, for anything he saw of me. I was just frozen to the spot for a minute, and then out I went after him. Just then round the church came Rendall, giving a shout as if the place were on fire, and I stopped to listen. When I looked round again I was alone."

"He had passed out of this gate, of course. Oh, *why* didn't you run after him?"

"Why should I? We didn't suspect anything wrong then, and that young donkey Rendall was in such a panic, it put everything else out of my head. Some of those little wretches of boys had filled the lock with mud, and he must needs force the key in and had bent the wards. I went off to get a locksmith I knew of to set it to rights, and the rest slipped out of my mind entirely, till Fraulein Klitz told me of the disappearance, and the trouble you were all in about it, on the Friday. She took it for a death-omen—what I had seen—and I began to think the same, till I felt ashamed to mention it. I'm as sure of what I've seen as that the church stands there. But it's another thing to swear to it in a witness-box."

Mr. Paramount had taken his departure. Sir John, accustomed to Hester's endless conferences on parish work, had lighted a cigar, and was philosophically waiting the conclusion of the interview, sauntering up and down under the poplar trees.

"Show me the place—the very place," Hester demanded, and they crossed to the great tombstone where Edric had once sat with Mrs. Damien in the golden moments for which he was to pay so dearly, traced his steps to the window, and on to the wicket gate beside the large one at the foot of the Vicarage steps.

"Come, Het, your mother will be getting anxious. We've had time to settle the affairs of all the distressed old women round St. Paul's. Good-night, Mr. de Cressy."

"Good-night, Sir John. I beg your pardon for detaining you so long."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SPELL OF THE ROSE.

For the first time for many a day, except Sundays, Elsie's dark little corner in St. Fridolin's was filled on the Friday following her father's visit to the Vicar. She glided in, white and thin like a little shadow, as her father had said, but walking easily and without assistance, to the eleven o'clock service; and Eustace was glad to find her awaiting him in the porch afterwards.

She gave him a wan smile, and for once did not wait for him to speak first, but began with feverish haste.

"I beg your pardon for asking, but can you tell me where Mrs. Damien is now, please?"

"She was in Paris when I last heard, nursing an old friend, Lady Monchalsea. As soon as she got better they were going to Dieppe, and then for a month's cruise in Lord Monchalsea's yacht—I don't know where."

"A month!" she gave a sort of despairing little cry. "Not home for another month!" She raised a pair of great sunken eyes to his, and then turned away, her fingers twisting and working as if in struggle with some outbreak of distress.

"She was a kind friend to you. Do you want her so badly?"

"Oh, I want her! I want her! I was wicked and ungrateful when she left, and now I don't know what will become of me."

"Let me try to help you. I can see that you have been in great trouble, my poor child. Have you felt neglected. I thought you had some new friends to take care of you."

Out broke the storm at this—violent, irrepressible. She sank on the wooden bench where she and her friend had sat hand-in-hand, years and years ago it seemed, and sobbed and sobbed, begging the Vicar in gasps to leave her—leave her! She was an unhappy girl, and wanted to die. What did it matter if she did die there! Oh, if she only could!

"Elsie, you are saying a great deal more than you intend me to believe," he spoke sternly at last. "If you were half as bad as you declare, it would be my duty to fetch your father and find out all about it. Now stop crying, or I shall go for him at once." Elsie did stop for a moment, and tried to dry her eyes with her soaked pocket-handkerchief, but the sobs continued.

"Get up and take my arm." And without more ado, he walked her across to the Vicarage, where Mrs. Goodliffe was on the look-out for them.

"Pretty dear. Over-tired, is she? I've got some good news that will cheer her." And she took the girl into her kind old arms.

Eustace returned to the church to await the organist, with whom

he was to have a consultation on the possibility of remedying the defective bass of the splendid old "Father Smith." The close, weary summer was telling on him—or so he assured himself as he paced the aisle dejectedly—tired, oh! so tired of his life and its work. "It takes a happy man to do really good work," he was saying to himself. "One can give out to others only what one holds oneself. I am a failure here. De Cressy would make a better thing of it if he were a year or two older. Should I do better anywhere else, though? At Altcar? No. I cannot put myself in Randolf's place down there. It would be a false position all round. They don't want me, either. Does anyone?"

A step on the threshold, that surely he knew from a thousand. A flash of sunlight through the open south door, and up the aisle there sped with hurrying, elastic tread, as in joyous haste, a bright figure, with shimmer of silk and rustle of lace, and slim outstretched hands.

"Mrs. Damien!" he cried, and stood still in amaze, silent and unresponsive from very incredulity.

"Home again," she smiled into his face. "Yes, *home*," and her bright gaze flashed round the great dim spaces aloft, and smoke-darkened walls, as if she loved them. "Did you not think I should come here first?"

"You are *very* welcome," was all that Eustace dared say, and even then dreaded that the tremulous accent said too much.

"I came yesterday with a friend. He was in haste and so was I, once my face was set homewards."

"A friend——" He stopped himself, and she suddenly flushed hotly, and a smile danced round her lips.

"Not Lady Monchalsea, unluckily. She is still very ill, and I have promised to go back to her for some time—when my errand here was done——" And again she flushed rosily.

"You lost your holiday," he began, embarrassed, half angry, desperate to hear more. "I heard how you left your friends."

"Oh! I was so thankful, so glad to leave them all. It would have been wrong to stay, and I was at my wits' end for an excuse to go. We were all at cross purposes and very unhappy," she went on, half laughing, in incoherent explanation; "all blaming one another for what was nobody's fault, I suppose, though Lady Monchalsea will tell you I behaved atrociously," and her eyes dropped.

"Professor Montrose?" The name slipped out unawares, and he raged at himself inwardly.

"Don't speak of him," she commanded imperiously, raising her hand as if to stop his lips. "I cannot bear to hear his name made light of. Noble! Generous! I will honour him to my latest day. He was far too great and good to have been in our frivolous, silly set for an hour. Oh! how I *wish* I had never gone! Now, tell me about St. Fridolin's. My girls?"—shaking off the distasteful subject with a graceful gesture of her pretty head.

"One is in sore need of you—Elsie. The others are much as you left them a month ago."

"They had a happy holiday, I know, thanks to you." And then she stopped confused. "So they want me back? Not more than I want them. Ah! my place is *here*. I *am* needed by someone!" she declared, joyously. "Aren't *you* glad to see me?" she demanded, in pure gaiety, turning suddenly on him.

"Am I glad?" broke from his lips, and his eyes finished the sentence.

"Then, you *did* miss me? Just a little?" she went on, with dancing eyes, but the sweetest, tenderest tremor round her perfect lips.

"Miss her?" How could he answer? What words did language hold to tell his mighty heart-hunger for the joy of her presence; his greedy rapture over her looks, her words, that held him spell-bound, powerless to do aught but gaze and gaze?

She knew quite well—the witch—without need of look or sign.

"Then, you do care for me?" she asked, softly and shyly, putting her two hands out to him, ungloved, white, appealing.

"Care!" He gave one great sob, and for all answer dropped his lips on those delicate, tremulous fingers, holding them for one minute, one short minute, of wild delight.

"Then, why don't you say so?" and the hands were withdrawn in a flash, and she was standing before him, upright, saucily defiant, altogether adorable. Then, while the sound of her audacious words seemed still to echo in the grey height above, her colour suddenly rose, deepening from brow to chin, her great lashes quivered downwards, and in a second she stood before him, the shyest of drooping roses.

"Because I should say too much if I spoke at all! Because to tell you how I have missed you, how I care for you, would be to say more than you might choose to hear. Because I cannot stop half way, nor tell you of my love without begging for yours in return, and that it is hardly fair to do," he broke out, hoarsely and low. "I have been seeing the grey, ugly, practical side of life, and I know how much more marriage means than the first hot fancy. If I thought that I could make you happy, not only now, but in the long years to come, *then* I would seek your love. Then I would never rest till I had won it. Now—dare I risk it?"

"But—if it were given unasked? But—if *I* dare risk it?" said a soft voice in answer, low, but perfectly clear and decided.

Eustace looked at her wonderingly, half despairingly, then caught her hands and kissed them again and again with hot passionate kisses, that seemed the real speech of his heart hurrying to contradict his half-hearted words.

"My Love, my Queen! It is for your sake I would bid you leave me."

"And yet you love me?" she queried, letting her hands rest in his, and laughing low in very fulness of contentment. "And you would not marry me, you say. And I am never to be told why?"

He might have dropped her hands, and taken advantage of the opening to tell her how he was trying to act for the best. How that long ago he had decided on his scheme of existence; and that pleasure and light words and sweet follies of love-making had no part therein, and that if love were to be admitted it was to be a severe and passionless sentiment, shared by some noble creature with a taste for self-sacrifice and a heart given to the most depressing work of the world; with whom he might tread the path of life, exalted alike above its pitfalls and its allurements. A most lofty, ascetic, and distinctly uncomfortable ideal; fortunately unrealisable. And here was he bound, heart and soul, at the feet of this smiling, pleasure-loving goddess, with her gay dresses and her worldly chatter, and no conceivable resemblance to the pale saint of his dreams, beyond the sweet voice and honest eyes. All that is what he *should* have considered had a chance been given him, but it was not; for the warm, slender fingers closed round his as he tried to withdraw them, and the great lovely shining eyes lifted themselves to his and held them fast.

"Tell me why?" her lips repeated.

Then it did come clearly to his mind that the saint would have accepted St. Fridolin's dirt and iniquities as the very crown and glory of the life he was offering her, while to this fair woman an explanation was due as to why it was not merely a preliminary to Altcar Court, and again his mind misgave him. Lastly there fell from his lips the very oddest answer ever given by man.

"Because I am not sure how much you love me."

She gave him one quick, fiery glance and dropped his hands as if his touch scorched her; then turned slowly away, her head perfectly erect, her teeth set deeply in her round red lip, and stepped softly down the dusky aisle.

Then he knew that for good or evil she carried his heart with her. "Rose!" he cried, and was at her side again. "Tell me ——"

"How can I tell you *anything*—if you *won't* ask me?"

There was an end of the matter. Out of the gloomy church they passed to the low south porch; and there the slanting sunbeams came and found them an hour later. The disappointed organist lingered, sending his great waves of music rolling and surging through the empty church and out over their heads unnoticed. De Cressy fidgeted in and out of the Vicarage in vain search, and two little girls, coming for Confirmation tickets, trotted away disappointed. No one thought of the south porch, where Eustace sat, with Rose's hand in his, pouring out his tale of trouble and doubt and would-be sacrifice, fully and freely, reading it all afresh by the light of her eyes. He

told her everything, and she dropped sweet little words of sympathy into his ear and bewitched one misgiving after another out of him, till he laid all plain before her.

"So it is for me you are afraid, after all!" she cried. "For me and St. Fridolin," with a gay little confident laugh. "I am not the sort of wife to bring home here! Oh, I quite understand your views, and if I did not want to marry you myself I should quite agree with them. I'm not one bit jealous of my shadowy rival—your ideal, Eustace—and never shall be. Don't you see, dear, what an immense advantage I possess over her?" stooping down as she stood beside him, and dropping her voice impressively. "Your saint, my dear, is non-existent, and—*I* am here!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"ON THE TRAIL."

"Oh, Rose, Rose! It's good to have you home once more! We've all been wearying for you. I could hardly believe my eyes when your note came to me just now. But must you really leave us again so soon?"

"I promised," said Mrs. Damien, with a regretful smile. "I cannot desert that poor old lady yet. I must see her safely through the cruise of the *Mallard*. Beatrix is no sailor. We must make the most of our time together. Come and take off your hat and begin at once. You're going to give me the rest of the day, of course."

"No, no! Don't tempt me. I've only an hour or so free. Mother is at Eastbourne, and I am in charge at home. Painters, plumbers, and decorators are to be turned loose on the premises next week; the rooms are half dismantled; Fräulein Klitz is in bed with a swollen face; the cook has gone for a holiday, and Daddy has asked the Tremletts to dinner."

Mrs. Damien laughed merrily at Hester's report. "Bring them all here," she suggested.

"I wish I could. Why!"—looking round in some surprise—"How long have you been home?"

"Since yesterday evening."

"And you have got into perfect order already! All your pretty things about, and the place full of flowers, as if you had been here for weeks."

Aunt Mamie here rose from her knees in a far-off corner, where she had been lending a last artistic touch to an arrangement of gold-striped curtain and hydrangeas in a dark red pot. She welcomed Hester with one of her gleaming smiles.

"What do you mean by all this splendour out of the season? You don't expect to have any visitors, do you? I thought *we* were

the last people left in town. Daddy, Fräulein, Jock and I play tennis in a howling wilderness every evening."

"De buds don't wait to ask de olminic what time to blow," Aunt Mamie replied, sententiously. "Heh, you dar, Mars Jock? S'pose you come 'long an' see what I got down b'low. I lef' some berries dar, I disremember 'xactly whar, but cryin' out dey was—jes *cryin' out* fo' some chillun to come 'long an' eat um."

Jock needed no second suggestion to slide off the chair on which Hester had posted him, and trot off hand-in-hand with Aunt Mamie. "You'll tell me a story," they heard him bargain.

"Good old Auntie. I think Lady Monchalsea will miss her more than she will me. I tried to persuade her to let me leave her in Paris, but she would by no means consent to my travelling alone with Lord Altcar ——"

"Lord Altcar! Was *he* with you? I never knew you knew him. And in Paris! Why, *I* saw him on Monday!" Hester exclaimed, with a whole volley of notes of interrogation in her voice.

"That did not prevent him from being in Paris on Tuesday, and bringing me home with him on Thursday, and returning to Altcar again yesterday."

"But *why?* Oh, I know you told me in your note about 'special private business,' and I, politely, have not referred to the subject; but all the same I feel it is a dark mystery; and if you laugh and get so pink-cheeked about it, no sense of propriety shall prevent me trying to find it out. You never used to have secrets from me in the good old days."

Mrs. Damien's face disappeared behind her palm-leaf fan, and a very meek little voice protested, "I'm sure I'm quite willing to tell you everything you wish to know, if you'll only mention what."

"What took Lord Altcar to Paris, and what brought you back to London?" was the prompt response to this invitation.

"He came to Paris to ask me to marry his son, and I came to London to ask his son to marry me."

Hester collapsed utterly.

"Rose!" she cried faintly presently. "No, don't answer. Don't wake me. Let me dream it out. I've fallen asleep in this rocking-chair, you know, while you were talking. I won't tell my dream lest you should laugh at it. Dreams go by contraries, and I know when I'm awake that, though you believe in Mr. Stannard as a priest to an absurd extent, you hate him as a man as utterly as it is lawful for any Christian to do."

"Hester!" And Rose put down her fan to give a supplicating glance, and put it up again to hide her hot cheeks. "Don't laugh, please, dear; and don't be so astonished. I know quite well that I'm not the right woman for him to choose, but that's his affair; and if he won't be wise and give me up, what's to be done? Lord Altcar said that it was as certain that he loved me as that he never would tell me so, unless I asked him. What could I do?"

"It's very creditable to Lord Altcar's penetration to have found it out, considering that his opportunities of seeing you together were limited."

"Why! It was *you* who told him so! You false, treacherous girl!" And Rose dropped her fan and leant forward to seize her friend's wrists. "Look in my face, and deny it if you dare. Lord Altcar said that he had long known that his son's affections were engaged."

"I'm sure he didn't put it in that stupid, old-maidish form."

"Well, perhaps he said 'Devoted heart and soul.'"

"That's better."

"But he could not discover to whom till you enlightened him."

"I *never*, *never* did any such thing! He came and talked so nicely to me that afternoon about St. Fridolin's, and drew me on to tell him all I could about his son's work there. We were sitting with Lady Altcar in the evening while the others were at the fireworks, and he *wouldn't* be referred to Mr. de Cressy; so, as you and the girls are all I know anything about, I talked about you. I said nothing more than the whole parish knows—that I'll swear. Yes, I *did* give him your address in Paris before we left."

Rose did not look altogether implacable. "We have all three fallen victims to the craft and guile of that wicked old man somehow, I suspect. He lit the match and ran away from the explosion this morning; but is coming back to-morrow to stay at the Vicarage. Eustace (Hester had to think for a minute who that might mean) has written to suggest that he shall bring Miss Liddell with him to introduce her to me, and I shall ask her to stay here till Monday. I want you and Sir John to dine here to-morrow, unless you are too incensed with Lord Altcar to break bread with him. On Monday we are all going to Altcar, to Eustace's mother. I wish it was over. Suppose they don't think me good enough!"

Hester laughed and protested, and then the two fell into a happy, idle, disjointed talk, half mirthful, half sad; not with "the sadness of pain," but that which "resembles sorrow only as the mists resemble the rain"—a lingering regret for the good days past, even in the greater brightness of the days that had come—had come to one of them, that is. Hester, even in her unselfish delight in her friend's happiness, felt that all her little whimsical fancies about being superseded and left out in the cold had become grim realities; soften the fact as she might. Even sympathy with her own troubles was denied her. She could not bring herself to name Edric and the dark shadow that hung over his fate to Rose in the midst of her new joy; and yet, beside it there seemed little that could befall in the world of consequence.

"What have you been doing all this time?" Rose asked, in her turn. "You are thin and tired-looking, Hester."

"It is the usual town look. Everybody seems the same just now. You were worse off in Paris, were you not?"

"Never mind me any more. I want to talk about you. How is the picture going on?"

"Very well. I want one more sitting and then Jock's penance will be over. I can do the figure from a model. I shall be able to make studies for the background next month, if we go to Scotland. Papa doesn't seem able to tear himself away from town while a creature remains in it that he can meet at the club. I don't mind. One place is as good as another."

There was a sound of dull hopelessness in her words that made Rose look enquiringly at her. "I'm sure you are not well, dear. How I wish I hadn't to leave you here. Will you come back with me?"

"No, no! It can't be done. Now I must go. I shall not see you before to-morrow evening, then?"

"Hardly. I went to see poor little Elsie this morning, but she was lying down to get rid of a headache. I must go early to St. Fridolin's and see if she will come for a drive, perhaps bring her home to luncheon; and in the afternoon I must go to meet Miss Liddell. Till eight o'clock then, to-morrow."

They descended together in search of Jock, whom they found in Aunt Mamie's own special pantry sitting swinging his heels on a table, while Aunt Mamie, hard at work with her gauffering irons, was setting the frills of one of her marvellous caps.

"Tore him all to bits?" they heard him ask, with intensest enjoyment.

"Ebbery mossel. Not nuff lef of him to fill a walnut-shell coffin."

"And his bones?"

"Cracked um, an groun um all to powder."

"And drunk up his blood out of a calabash? Just as he said he would. Jolly!" And Jock's boots gave an appreciative flourish. "Hester! you should just hear this. Aunt Mamie's stories are prime. Won't you tell her one? Did you ever hear of a Ju-Ju house? It's a place where some people go to church (I wish we did), with elephants' tusks, and crocodiles' skins and teeth and skulls and all sorts of jolly things in it. 'Come home to tea'? What do we want with tea?"

A plate with a pile of strawberry hulls on it, an open pot of preserved ginger, some flakes of pastry and a general blissful stickiness overspreading the young gentleman's countenance sufficiently explained this indifference to life's grosser needs; but Hester was inflexible, and carried him off.

"Isn't Aunt Mamie fun?" exclaimed Jock in ecstasy as he capered along homewards beside his sister. "Hester! Do you think I may go and stay with her to-morrow and Sunday? I was to ask mamma—oh, she's not at home; well, you and Fräulein can give me leave. I'll let you paint me as much as you like all the morning if you will. She'll take awful care of me, she says, and I'll see that

she goes to church on Sunday. Say 'Yes, you may,' Hester, there's a good old thing!"

"We'll see what papa says this evening. If he says 'Yes,' you may go: don't let her frighten your wits out with those horrid stories of hers, though. I wonder how you can ask her to tell them."

"I tell you they're jolly. Fräulein knows some good ones; Wehrwolves and Black Huntsmen and wicked barons, but they're nowhere beside Aunt Mamie's. Bears and snakes and witches and ghosts—real good ones. I'll tell you about the ghost at the Endicotts'—that was her old family, you know—to-morrow while you're painting, if you'll remind me. A sensible ghost—not like that stupid old thing of Mr. de Cressy's. That meant nothing."

Nothing! It meant a haunting shadow over one life at least; so Hester told herself, with a sudden pang. A grim secret terror that never left her side for an instant. It rose with her in the morning, walked beside her through all the day's duties, and that very night laid a sudden cold clutch on her heart at some casual words of her father's.

"Het, I forgot to tell you. I sha'n't go down to Eastbourne next week, I think. You may start Fräulein and Jock off on Monday without waiting for me. The Royal Denbigh are to embark on Wednesday. Wouldn't you like to come down to Portsmouth and see them off? I must go. I wouldn't miss being there to say 'Good-bye' to them on any account. You won't come? You aren't half the girl you used to be, Het. I wonder if we shall see that boy Poynter there. I'd give a hundred pounds to have him turn up in time. It would be the only thing to save him. Amongst us all we might pull him through, then; if he doesn't, I don't know how it will go with him. How white you look. Go to bed, little girl. Good-night."

Jock secured his father's permission, and was in a high state of good spirits and amiability when he presented himself in the studio next morning. Fortunately for Hester, he required no special amusement during the sitting, but entertained her with the whole of Aunt Mamie's legends, beginning with the headless dog that attended the Endicott family, and ending with a peculiarly ghastly and gory story of a hunt of a murderer through a swamp, personally conducted by the murdered man's ghost.

"And the dog was a regular man-hunter!" he explained, with much gusto: "trained to catch negroes. And what do you think, Aunt Mamie says Roswal is just that sort. A Spanish bloodhound, a man-hunter! I wonder if Roswal has ever tracked anybody down and torn him limb from limb?" he went on, with thoughtful enjoyment. "Don't you wish Mr. de Cressy had had him the other night?"

"Why, Jock, Roswal has never been out of our house since he was born. How could he ever learn to do such dreadful things?"

"But his father might have done, and I dare say he knows how to, all the same. Now, if Mr. de Cressy had only laid a bit of the blood-stained clothes ——"

"But there weren't any blood-stained clothes. Do keep your head still for a moment!"

"Well, his glove then. Lay it on that old tombstone, and hold tight to the leash while he dashes forward to the spot where the murderer is lurking in concealment—that's what I should do."

"I wish you'd try and fancy yourself the murderer a little; and look as if you thought he'd got you. Now tell me another story, and keep as still as you can for five minutes; then I shall have done with you."

Hester finished her work and saw Jock off to St. Maur Road in high glee; visited Fräulein Klitz in bed, and brewed her a fresh poppy-head fomentation; ordered the dinner for Sunday, and then set herself to live through the long, lonely, haunted day as she best might. She generally found work in plenty for her active little fingers, but to-day it would not last out the morning, somehow. A card came round from Mrs. Damien: "Cannot come to see you, as I expect Miss Liddell early. Have seen Birdie. Unsatisfactory;" and on it she pondered as she paced the quiet, half-dismantled rooms, with Roswal's big head under her hand. She did not care to go out aimlessly alone, even if she had not known how much her mother disliked her doing so.

It recalled somehow the day when Rose's departure was decided on, when she, in a fit of restlessness, had started for St. Fridolin's, to Elsie, with such scant results. Then, with the remembrance back came the shadow closer and blacker. "Do you remember," it seemed to breathe in her ear, "what you missed by going that day? Do you remember your foolish mistrust and anger? How you crept off to the church to give way to your fit of self-made misery? Your jealousy of poor little Elsie?" Hester pressed her hands to her ears, as if there were a veritable voice sounding there.

"I'll go there again," she suddenly decided. "I don't know why, but I feel it will be better for me to be there than anywhere else. Mother doesn't mind that. I'll go and wait in the church till evensong. I shall be home long before it's time to dress. Roswal, you must be content with Markham for the rest of the day."

Roswal had no intention of doing any such thing; but, like a wary dog, he let himself be sent into Sir John's study, where he flopped down, with ostentatious obedience, while Hester shut the door; and, her footsteps once out of hearing, sprang through the window and made his way through the kitchens to the front area. There he lay low, till, as he expected, a cab made its appearance with Markham on the box. He watched Hester enter, and then whisked out and followed at a discreet distance till he knew it was safe to proclaim himself.

"Ugh, you brute!" as Markham spied him with disgust. Hester resigning herself to the inevitable, ordered the cab to stop and admitted him, expressing herself strongly; while he crawled in, and dropped at her feet, with a hypocritical air of self-abasement.

"Well, all you've got by this is that you'll have to be shut up in the Vicarage cellar till I want you; or else go home by Underground

with Markham." Roswal lifted first his head deprecatingly, and then one paw, which, after one or two purposeless flourishes, he dropped on Hester's knee.

"Oh, Cuss, do you remember what a bad dog you were last time we came here?" she cried, with a laugh that was half a sob; and Cuss blinked appreciatively. They alighted at the Vicarage, and Markham departed, with instructions to return in the evening for his young mistress. Before visiting Mrs. Goodliffe, Hester paused, attracted, as she always was, by the stillness and solitariness of the grey, bare churchyard; and, half involuntarily, sauntered through the open wicket. The windows of the Parish Room were open, and somebody was sweeping and arranging things inside. She thought of de Cressy's story, and shivered.

"Cuss! If it had been you who had been there," she exclaimed impulsively. "What *could* you have done, old dog?" Some chance reminiscences of Jock's anecdotes flashed across her mind and made her start. "*Could* you have traced him, do you think? Is there any truth in such stories?" Her cheeks began to burn, and her eyes to shine with a sudden, wild notion.

"Come here," she cried, and walked across to the great tombstone. "Who was here, Cuss? Can you find him?"

Roswal obediently began to examine the stone and all around with an affectation of extreme care, casting about in his sagacious old head for his mistress's possible meaning.

A scent a fortnight old is not a hopeful one—even if ghosts *do* leave any trail; but he searched nevertheless with much inward perplexity and searchings of mind. He decided at last that Hester was minded to revive an old game of her youth, in which he and she were to be lost together, and he was to triumphantly discover the lost track and bring her home, with many barks and tail-waggings. Following up this happy notion, he forthwith nosed out a path direct from the tombstone towards the Vicarage, and invited her to accompany him thereon. They paused at the window of the Parish Room, as in duty bound (they having stopped there on their way); then on through the wicket gate, and so along the quiet little street to the point where they had left the cab. Here he wagged his great tail and awaited further instructions, while Hester, who had watched his movements with feverish anxiety, stopped discouraged.

"Is that all, Cuss? Can't you tell what I want? Oh, I know! I ought to show you something of his, and I have nothing—nothing—only this."

It was Edric's letter, the one he had written in sore disappointment at missing her on the very day that she had been recalling; the day she made the grand blunder about the Professor, and everybody's troubles began. She had read it; poring over each blunt, inartfully constructed sentence; and had thought over the queer story it contained till her head grew dazed, without perceiving in it the

slightest clue that might warrant her disregarding Edric's humbly hinted wish for the matter to be considered confidential.

"Why should I have told anyone, and whom?" she argued with herself. "Daddy could not help me, and mother would be terrified at the mystery. I wish I had consulted Mr. Stannard at first, but I do not see what he could do more than apply to the Meynells, and that he has done already."

She called Roswal back to the tombstone, and then drew the letter from its envelope and let him smell it. "Find him! Find him, good dog," she begged him urgently.

Roswal had dim recollections of a letter entering into some performance in the days when he was a puppy and supposed to be capable of learning tricks. His wrinkled old face grew keen, his eyes sought first the letter and then Hester with intensest desire to comprehend her plans. Then he smelled everything carefully all over again, round and round in a widening circle. Then he stopped, threw his head up, and gave a sudden deep-voiced bark.

"You have found something. Oh, good Roswal, what!"

Roswal *had* found something—an idea!

He was to take Hester somewhere he was sure—but where? Somewhere that he knew, of course. Nobody expects a dog to do more. He saw it wasn't to the church, or the Parish Room, or home again, and he felt he had exhausted the resources of St. Fridolin's, till a sudden inspiration seized him. He had yet one more association with the place. "Come along! I have it!" And, with a confident air, he made straight for the old resurrection gate, his mistress keeping pace with eager steps; and then, once down in the little crooked alley, made straight as an arrow for Lavender Row.

"Here, why *here?*" Hester exclaimed to herself. There seemed something ominous in this retracing of her footsteps; but Roswal led on, right up to the door, open as usual, and at the top of the three low steps stood and waited.

Hester entered with uncertain tread and knocked, but faintly, on Elsie's door. There was as faint a response from within, and she turned the handle. The room seemed empty at first, and silent, except for the noisy tick of the tall clock in the corner. The old, well-polished furniture stood in dreary orderliness around the walls, and Elsie's couch was vacant. Venturing a step further in, Hester heard a slight movement, and saw Elsie crouched on the floor at the couch-side, resting her face against the cushions, as if in pain.

"Come in!" she cried. "What is it?" Then she turned a little white, scared face round, and, raising her dulled, woeful eyes, beheld Hester. She scrambled to her feet, and stood steadying herself by one frail, shaking hand on the table's edge.

"Are you ill?" Hester asked, startled into forgetfulness of her purpose by the change in the girl, and advancing with outstretched hand. "What is the matter? Can I not help you?"

Elsie's face had grown small and peaked, and her eyes glowed unnaturally brilliant out of two great, dark circles. Her lips looked hot and fever-dried; and, as she tried to answer Hester, a little hectic spot burned in each white cheek.

"I am not ill," she said, speaking hoarsely and ungraciously. "What can I do for you, Miss Archdale?" And her tone seemed to require an explanation of the intrusion.

Hester felt checked and discomfited, as she had done before, and by the same unaccountable consciousness of defiance and mistrust on Elsie's part. She drew back embarrassed, especially when the sense of her position returned upon her. Roswal stepped slowly in, and leaned against her for approval. "I came ——" she hesitated: then, struck by a sudden thought, went on more freely: "I want you, if you will, to tell me what news you have had from your brother?"

"We have heard nothing for a long time. The regiment was to move directly, when he last wrote; he has been too busy, I suppose." She spoke stiffly, almost sullenly. She had been longing herself with fierce anxiety for some word from him on her own account, and had raged or sickened with disappointment at his silence, day after day. She was in no mood to give gracious replies. "I will get you his last letter, if you wish to see it."

She walked away to the old-fashioned, brass-bound work-box in which she kept her treasures, Hester watching her with pained curiosity. There was a change in her in more ways than one. In her dress for one thing. Instead of her usual little print gown, with its trim white frills, she wore a silky summer material; soft-toned and quietly made, but, to any woman's eyes, representing the price of a dozen cottons or serges, and the slipper that peeped from under its skirt was delicate kid, instead of stout-soled leather.

"Here is the letter," in a tone that said distinctly, "Take it and go!"

A glance at the date showed Hester that it could tell her no fresh news. "Then you have heard nothing since?—I mean, of Mr. Poynter?"

Elsie clasped her fingers suddenly and strained them across her breast. "Why do you come to me for news of him?" she demanded, in a high, unnatural tone. "What have *I* to do with you or your friends?"

"Forgive me!" Hester pleaded. "It was by a wild chance that I came here—from the place where he was last seen on earth. We have followed his footsteps to this house, and I ask of you—which of you who dwell here was the last to see him before he passed away from amongst us all?"

Her voice was quivering with excitement when she began to speak, now it broke suddenly. Elsie continued to hold her with a strange, fixed, unresponsive gaze. "I can tell you nothing," her lips formed almost silently.

The two girls faced one another for an instant longer. Hester's face eager, tremulous, disappointed, mistrustful. Elsie's a blank. She kept her fingers tightly clasped, ignoring Hester's proffered hand, and hardly bending her head in farewell.

"Good-bye! I am sorry if I have offended you. Come, Roswal!" And the door closed on her.

"What does it mean?" cried Hester, laying her hand on Roswal's tawny forehead. "Oh, Cuss, what is she hiding from us? And why does she hate me so?"

A bill-sticker swinging his paste-pot came along. The police, excited to some last exertions before the withdrawal of the reward, were strewing bills broadcast over St. Fridolin's district. Farther on, a figure in the well-known blue and red was hurrying along with a handful of letters for Lavender Row, and the top one of the pile bore a direction in Sampson's handwriting.

"What does she mean?" Elsie had cried, sinking on her couch when she was once more alone. "What does she know? What does she suspect me of? Only one night more! I cannot be mistaken. Oh! It could not have meant that it was through her that the tidings were to come to me."

Struck by a new terror, she raised her head, and gazed blankly out at the dun, frowning wall before her window. The bill-sticker was at work making bold and rapid flourishes with his brush across a bill, on which, over his shoulder, she read unheeding of the sense:

"MISSING! £100 REWARD;"

and before she could take in the rest, came the postman's knock on her door.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"PECCAVI!"

Mr. Paramount, walking briskly homewards a few minutes before his customary hour, stopped within sight of his own door indignant at the appearance of a white parallelogram flaunting the smoky umber of his usual out-look, in defiance of the shadowy legend "Bill-stickers Beware" that adorned the top left-hand corner of the wall; still legible if you knew where to look for it. He raised his neat umbrella and would have proceeded to execute judgment on the offending placard forthwith, when the sight of a name in big capitals arrested his upraised hand, and with the other he hastily perched his glasses on his nose, with an exclamation of dismay.

"'*Missing. Mr. Edric Poynter! Since the thirty-first of July.*'—Absconded, eh?"—with a gloomy nod—"a lesson to Sampson. Well, well, I'm sorry, too. He was a pleasant, gentlemanly youth. '*Height, five feet eleven, fair complexion,*' that's him. '*Information to be given*

to Meynell, Meynell and Mott.' Dear, dear, that's serious. I wonder if Elsie knows?" And he trotted indoors to convey the news.

No Elsie was to be found, however, either in the parlour or in her own little room, and depositing a huge roll of papers on the table, he went off to exchange his office-coat for the more ancient suit retained for home wear. When he came back, Mrs. Ridge was busy laying the table for tea. "No, I haven't seen her," she answered him. "I thought perhaps some of her West End friends had called for her and taken her out. Mrs. Damien's back, and a good thing too, say I. There's ladies that is ladies, and she's one of them." The slap with which the good woman applied a lump of butter to the loaf she was cutting expressed so strongly that she had something to say on the converse side of the proposition that Mr. Paramount was moved to enquire: "Who else are you alluding to, Mrs. Ridge?"

"I name no names," with a nod indicating that she could if she chose; "and far be it from me to cast a word up at poor little Elsie; yet foreigners *will* be foreign, and living for months like the birds of the air, with no cooking to speak of, and next week in a carriage and pair, is not *my* view of what's right and respectable." And, with a significant nod for the conclusion of this dark saying, Mrs. Ridge bustled off to fill the teapot at the kettle, to which a neighbour was kindly "lending a boil up."

Mr. Paramount was anxiously pondering out the "bearing of these observations," as alarmed and mystified as she could desire, on her return. "Is there anything wrong? Anything that I ought to be told? About those friends of Elsie's?"

"I make no insinuations. I only say that if—as I was given to understand—the Beltrans have left England for Continental watering-places, why, good riddance and no loss to anybody, and as to fretting after them, don't you give it no encouragement, like a sensible man."

Then with a last artistic touch to the plateful of radishes balancing the pickles on the other side of the dish of cold beef, Mrs. Ridge departed, leaving Mr. Paramount to digest her exordium with his tea as he best could.

Despite the disquiet she had succeeded in arousing in him, his enjoyment of the tea and radishes, and most engrossing of all, the contents of the parcel of papers which he opened and read as he eat, he found his thoughts going back perpetually to the handbill outside. "I wish I could find him—for his own sake as well as the reward," he thought. "It can't be a case of embezzlement, surely! A fraudulent bankruptcy? I shouldn't have believed it of him. Most extraordinary that it should have come under my eyes just now." And dipping a radish into his salt, he turned again to his paper.

It was a journal of ancient date, with a full account of a forgotten Ritualist prosecution; and Mr. Paramount plunged into it with much zest, stopping now and then to mark a point here and there. When he had finished one paper he took up another.

"It's *most* extraordinary," he repeated. "That young man was the first to turn my thoughts in this direction. 'Go and look at one,' he said, and there has not been a Sunday since that I haven't been to two or three. I've been the round of their Sundays, Dailies, High and Low, Festival and Mission services. I've seen the worst. If there's no law in the land that can stop some of the goings on that I've been a witness to, then it's clear we at St. Fridolin's have no case whatever. He'll get a verdict. There's no denying it—and I don't care if he does."

He poured out and swallowed another cup of tea—a cold one, for he had neglected to cover the pot—and took up his papers again.

"Where can Elsie be?" he wondered. It was very forlorn and comfortless without her. Would Mrs. Ridge come in and take away those tea-things, or must he sit with them under his eyes till Elsie returned? He hovered about unsettled and uncomfortable, with no place to sit down to and spread his papers out. At last he cleared a corner of the table and resumed his studies.

"We've *no* case!" he repeated, pettishly. "*I* won't be put into a witness-box and be made to cut a ridiculous figure just to gratify Bowles and Garraghty. They may show up *them* as much as they please, and I dare say they will. Why, it might injure me with the Firm, and I should never hear the end of it from young Mr. Ebden—and the others all take their tone from him."

He got up and wandered restlessly in search of Elsie. No trace of her in her little bedroom, where the old man lingered awhile, looking round the shabby, comfortless den, so carefully kept with its few poor little scraps of adornment. There was her mother's picture, a steel-grey shiny daguereotype, which had to be unhooked and held at an angle before any trace of form or feature was visible, except where the brooch and gold chain had been lavishly begilt. Sampson hung, red-coated, velvet-framed, in spick and span newness, a handsome soldier-like figure, from which the old man turned with an impatient "Pish!" and beside him a list of services at St. Fridolin's. On the meagre toilet-table stood the old watch-stand, with his dead wife's watch in it—run down. He took it up with an injured feeling and wound and set it carefully, touching the little silk watch-lining on which his Emmie had proudly embroidered her initials the day after he gave it her, with a forget-me-not wreath. The paper was dropping from the damp walls; the ceiling black with age. He looked at the pinched and spare little bed and at the crazy furniture. "A poor place for a delicate child like Elsie," he said to himself, shaking his head sorrowfully. "But she never complained or asked for better."

Were the quaint corner cupboard and the rickety chest of drawers as poorly replenished within as the rest, he wondered? He tried one drawer. It was locked, but a shake jerked the paltry bolt out of its worn groove, and he peered in curiously. There were some tidy, scanty, piles of underlinen, and at one side, carefully wrapped round

with soft paper, lay a handsome lace handkerchief for the neck, and underneath it a showy painted leather glove-case, with gilded mountings, strongly scented with "Sandringham Bouquet." He touched and gazed with strong repugnance. How came these here, these showy, costly gewgaws, so unlike the rest, so unlike Elsie? He opened the case. Inside were half-a-dozen gloves of different tints and extravagant length. He snapped the lid down angrily, and returned moodily to the deserted parlour.

"It's a fine thing to me to profess to manage a parish, isn't it?" he asked himself, bitterly. If I make no better hand of it than I do of my own house——" Somehow the usual resource of holding the Vicar accountable for all things evil that befell would not serve to-night. He picked up his papers, impatiently. "We've no case," he kept on repeating. "The suit is as good as given against us, if ever we let it begin. It's not too late. Bowles and the rest may go on at their own risk. I've done with it," rolling up the papers into a bundle, "and I'll see Garraghty this very evening and tell him so, and I wish that 'Blue Dog' had been burned to the ground before I ever set foot in it," he ended, viciously. "Yes, I'll give them fair warning and then——" He was walking excitedly up and down the parlour now, and speaking half aloud. "*Then*, I'll go straight myself to the Bishop and withdraw the whole Memorial. I will! I'll explain my position to the Bishop and put myself right with *him*, whatever happens. It's the straightforward and manly thing to do, and Bowles and Garraghty may swallow it or not!" Even in his unhappiness there was a gleam of comfort in the thought of making things unpleasant, from perfectly pure and exalted motives, to his quondam associates of whom he had long ago sickened.

The heat of his determination carried him through the process of dressing again to go out. Some thought of Elsie's possible return checked him on the threshold, as he sallied forth. "Why, it's Saturday!" he exclaimed. "Where are my wits! She's at her lecture, of course. And Mrs. Damien is home again too. Of course she'll be there." And he went his way with a lighter heart.

When he had gone, a door opened softly on the upper floor, and from the empty, shut-up room that the Beltrans used to occupy there stole a trembling little figure and crept step by step down the broad staircase. She had spent hours, each holding a lifetime of agony, there in her loneliness. Lying on the bare, dusty boards clutching Sampson's letter with its fatal tidings to her breast, choking with strangled sobs, biting her fingers cruelly to keep back the hysteric shrieks that struggled to break forth, till, spent with the struggle, she lay still from exhaustion, and for a few moments hoped she was dying, till a sudden stab of pain wakened her to life and anguish once more. She had rushed up there for quiet when the first sentences brought home the meaning of Hester's words to her; and kneeling at the half-opened window, she read with catching breath and half distraught brain; till,

as she stood gazing blankly out in incredulous horror, there before her she read the ghastly confirmation of the story. The great black letters showed plain enough across the road. They were seeking for him then, and the search had led them there; and under this second blow she fell to the ground as one dead.

She could not measure the time she laid there senseless, any more than she could that of waking torture that followed. She heard her father's footsteps below and kept silent, locked in with her misery. One idea now possessed her; the thought of Mrs. Damien. "I must go to her and tell her all," she said over and over again, as she crouched silent, listening for a chance of escape. She heard her father leave the house and stole out and down the stairs. It was still early, not more than eight o'clock, and, except in Lavender Row, a bright evening. She dressed mechanically, counted the money in her purse, and made her way out of the house.

She thought she knew how to make her way to Mrs. Damien's. Her father had taken her there once before, and she had driven many a time to the house with her kind friend. She must go first to the Mansion House Station to-night and take the train. She took a wrong turning to start with in her preoccupation, and had to ask her way back through miles—it seemed—of unfamiliar streets. There was a crowd at the station that terrified her, and when she at last got to the ticket place, all recollection of the station she was to ask for had gone out of her mind. "St. Maur Road," she said, desperately.

"No such place on this line," said the ticket-clerk, with pardonable sharpness. "Now, pass on."

"I mean out near Kensington," she feebly persisted.

"All right." A ticket and some change were pushed over to her, and she moved on.

There was another crowd and a worse one on the platform, and Elsie, jostled and frightened, but for the sharp spur of her purpose would have turned back weeping. The train, when it did come, was crowded and she ran from one door to another searching in vain for a seat. A fatherly-looking old man beckoned her and helped her in at last, and she crouched down beside him, shaking in every limb. She took courage after a time to show him her ticket and ask when she was to get out.

"Kensington? That's two—three—five—yes, *five* stations off. *I* don't go on so far. Don't get out at South Kensington by mistake" (which, if she had done so, would have been the very best thing for her). He left her soon after, and she sat watching nervously for her journey's end to come.

The novelty and miseries of the way sometimes drove the thoughts of her errand from her for an instant—but for an instant only. Back they came after each stoppage, making her fret at the length of the road and spring up in nervous terror of missing her destination. It seemed hours from the time of starting, when she took courage to

make a second appeal, this time to a very little boy with a very capable air.

"Know Kensington?" he replied. "I should just think I did, and I only hope you've plenty of time to spare if you mean to get there this way. You should have changed at Gloucester Road, you know. We shall be at Hammersmith directly."

The look on her face startled even this complacent child. "There, there! Hold up, don't cry about it! *I* will see what I can do for you when we get out. They all know *me*, here."

He was as good as his word, and with his aid and that of a kindly porter, she found herself in the direct road once more; but time had been slipping on during her wanderings; and worse, her strength was fast slipping away too. She began to walk with the old painful drag; and sudden shoots of pain in the injured side made her stop and gasp for breath many a time during the last and worst part of her weary pilgrimage: the long endless miles of streets that lay between the station and St. Maur Road. The night was getting dark and clouded, and ten o'clock was sounding from some neighbouring steeple as she neared her goal. She was fain to hold by the railings to steady herself, as she peered up doubtfully at house after house, trying to make out the number. Nearly all were dark and shut up; only from one came a stream of soft light over flower-filled balconies into the road, and to it, as a beacon, she instinctively made her way. She had reached her journey's end at last.

She stood swaying backwards and forwards for a few minutes, lacking courage and strength to mount the steps, and, when she slowly and painfully dragged herself up to the door, her faltering knock —drowned in the festive bustle within—remained unanswered. It seemed impossible to try again; but, after long waiting, she did so. This time the door was opened, but no friendly face appeared—Henderson's or Aunt Mamie's, or one of the smart maids she knew, and who knew her—only that of a stranger, overwhelmed with responsibilities, and with dessert and ices on his mind. He gave one hasty glance at Elsie's dusty, draggled figure. "Not at home," he pronounced sharply before she had uttered a word, and would have closed the door had she not pressed forward desperately.

"But I *must* see her!" she almost shrieked. "Go and tell her I am here."

"I tell you I can't. We've company to-night. Come to-morrow, like a good girl. There, be off!" he exclaimed, distractedly. "Or, look here, if you'll give me your message, I'll take it when dinner's over; but you sha'n't come in now." And with visions of plate-and-drawing-room-ornament robberies rising to his memory, he shut the door, resolutely this time.

She staggered back, too overcome to make a further attempt, and sat down on the steps to think what she was to do next. Go home again? How could she face the toil? All that had passed since

she left Lavender Row seemed like a long nightmare. *How* could she gather up strength to encounter it a second time?

The night darkened, and a rain-storm came driving up from the east, of all points the most detestable. First came whirling little gusts, dry and cutting, flinging dust and gravel into eyes and mouth, with stinging arrows of rain that hardly seemed to wet the ground, only to spatter viciously Elsie's thin little cape till it clung to her bowed shoulders. Then more drops and bigger, and every now and then the driving, piercing gusts swept down from some unexpected quarter and beat her head down on her huddled-up knees.

She was soaked to the skin and chilled to the bone before she had sat there long. What did she care? Why should she stir? What shelter should she seek if this one was denied her? She even felt a dreary joy in her suffering when some fiercer blast than the rest showered its blows on her, leaving her stunned and breathless in its passing. She *could* not live through this, and there would be an end of all the trouble she had caused, and which she could never mend by living. Mrs. Damien would be sorry, though. She wished she could get up and go from that door to some other where nobody would know her when they found her dead there in the morning.

Down came the rain again, savagely pelting; so that the man who opened the door to call up a cab for the Archdales, if such a thing might be found, merely discharged a whistle into the darkness, and shut the door again, going to the window to watch for the result. Elsie hardly noticed him, nor yet, later on, the four-wheeler that drew up at her feet. Then, in an interval of comparative quiet, the door once more opened and a gentleman stepped out, and almost over her. She managed to raise her head to the rush of warmth and light that poured down on her, and he saw her face.

"Hullo! What's this? Hester, look here. Isn't this one of your girls? Dead or fainting, or something."

Within, in the warm, flower-scented drawing-rooms, the party was dispersing in languid, unwilling fashion, reluctant to break the charmed circle that held the evening's pleasure. Lord Altcar had the larger room to himself, sauntering leisurely round, looking at pictures and bric-a-brac, or returning with frowning brow and pursed lips to the working out of a project only less artful than the one of which he had contemplated the triumphant result that very evening. Mary Liddell, with a photograph upside down in her hands, was undisguisedly watching the lovers as Eustace bade a ten-minutes'-long farewell just within the soft green shadow of the conservatory palm-leaves. They were the first real lovers unsophisticated Mary had ever seen, and she thrilled from fingers to toes with gentle excitement and curiosity. Eustace in love, and looking like a lover, too! It was altogether wonderful and delightful. Would he talk to Rose like lovers in books? What *did* he say when he proposed? Did he go down on his knees—and oh! *would* he—did he—ever kiss her? And Mary

blushed and trembled vicariously at the audacious imagining. How thankful she was that it had not fallen to her lot to act the heroine's part in any such scene. How small and incompetent she would have felt, while this splendid Rose could never come short of perfection in whatever position she found herself. Most heartily did good little Mary give thanks that her hero had found just such a lady-love as she could have wished to bestow on him.

There! The farewell was over. *Had* he kissed her hand in that one brief minute when Lord Altcar's back was turned, and Mary, all aglow at her own tact and dexterity, had screened herself behind the biggest photograph? What was the noise outside? Here were the Archdales back again, and Hester at the door, saying, "Rose! Rose, do come here for a minute!" Mrs. Damien came forward, startled at Hester's tone, but before she reached the door, Hester was pushed aside, and Elsie, breaking from Sir John's sustaining arm, stood in the midst of them—a soiled, draggled, forlorn little figure, turning her wild eyes from one to another and holding out her shaking hands as if for pity.

"Elsie! my Elsie, what has happened to you?" And Rose hurrying up, made as if she would take the woe-begone little creature in her arms, but Elsie waved her back.

"Don't come near me or touch me! Listen to what I have come to tell you. To tell everybody. It is right you should all know what a wicked wretch I am. You will never forgive me. Never! I did not know what I was doing, but I killed him. I did indeed."

There was a second's pause, while her hearers looked at one another, all at fault but Hester, who, white and scared, seized her father's arm and gasped out two words.

"What?" roared Sir John. "Poynter? Does the girl mean him?"

Elsie nodded faintly; the little flash of strength that had given her voice to begin her confession was fast flickering out.

"She doesn't know what she is saying. *You* killed?—*You?*"

"How did you do it?" demanded Lord Altcar, striking in sharply.

"*I poisoned him!*" The words came out as she had been rehearsing them over and over again in her mind through the last long hours of woe—distinct and unmistakable. Then, tossing her arms despairingly, she gave one feeble cry, and fell in a senseless heap at Rose's feet.

(*To be continued.*)

A VANISHED REALM.

PERHAPS one of the most interesting features of Parisian society in the days that are now no more was the Salon, an institution that even as an exotic has always refused to flourish out of France.

It owed its origin to Madame de Rambouillet, who formed it for the purification and perfecting of the French language. No hereditary law transmitted its rule. The only and an unspoken canon was that a woman's hand should hold the sceptre. It thus became a powerful lever in the affairs of men. To be queen of a salon did not necessitate birth in the purple. Even before the Revolution had levelled classes, personal charm and esprit were the sole qualifications required. Madame de Rambouillet, it is true, boasted, in one sense, the purest blood; but her successor, Madame Geoffrin, was a true bourgeoise, without a single link to the society she afterwards ruled with a grace and power that have scarcely ever been equalled. Madame de Rambouillet's coterie was narrow and fastidious; Madame Geoffrin's, in one sense, cosmopolitan, to which not only the royalty and aristocracy of the day crowded, but the chief men of letters, statesmen of all countries, and independent politicians.

The secret of her influence lay in personal charm, the perfect knowledge of the art of conversation and of receiving. Madame de Lespinasse was another notable instance of individual charm and tact, in spite of personal plainness and no social advantage. In a small apartment, actually furnished for her by her followers, she ruled with as high a hand as any autocrat to the manner born.

None of these women attempted any literary or artistic distinction; they were not even philanthropic; they simply talked and received beautifully, and achieved immortality.

A salon of those days meant the devotion of a life to its interests: it meant diplomatic art and power. But the social throne fell with the national one, and during the interregnum of the first Revolution the salon vanished. When order had succeeded chaos, the Parisians turned longingly to its restoration; but the raison d'être of the original institution had passed with restrictive monarchies, and it never again possessed the power or the charm it had formerly enjoyed. Men of extreme views now found easy ventilation on public platforms, in the press, in parliament, and public life generally.

But presently the salon assumed another raison d'être—that of art; and the reign, beginning afresh, took new vitality. For thirty years Madame Lebrun queened it every Saturday evening in her salon, sur-

rounded by all that France could boast of literature and art, and what it could muster of aristocrats. She died in 1842, at the age of ninety. "Age had not dimmed, nor custom staled her infinite variety."

Then came Mademoiselle Contat, the beautiful and popular actress and songstress. Society's craze was Music; its god Art; it rallied round the high priestess of the Sister Graces.

But Art was something more than a god to the impoverished noblesse; to such as had the endowment, it was bread; and the daughters of the Faubourg St. Germain worked in the studios of the great painters and sculptors as professional students. Others elaborated their musical gifts, and society at large benefited.

A generation of accomplished women had arisen, whose competition raised artists in the social scale. Talent became the fashion, and men of science occupied the highest places in the Synagogue. Society never was so brilliant. It was then bien porté to be poor; the gentry were proud of being "ruined by the Revolution." It was when Napoleon was the demi-god of salvation that Madame Recamier rose, a vision of beauty and grace, and taking the reins of the salon in her hands, ruled there with a power utterly isolated from parties or politics.

Her story is well known: the petty spite of Napoleon; her banishment and triumphant return, when the tyrant had become "a nameless thing." Her true salon dates from this period. She upheld it no longer with wealth and circumstance; the former had vanished, and the latter was not. She trusted to her esprit and her personal charm; and her salon became a power.

It was under her insensible guidance that Madame Möhl, then the plain English girl, Mary Clarke, became fitted to be her successor. She is described by Quinet as making a sorry figure, in homely dress and tangled hair, and yet greatly liked and considered by serious people. She was utterly devoid of self-consciousness. Her memoirs, by Kathleen O'Meara, recently published by Mr. Bentley, are charming reading; and, as the subject of them died so lately as 1883, they are invested with all the interest of matters and persons of the present day.

Although highly accomplished in conversation, Mary had not profited in manner and refinement by her intimate association with the denizens of the Abbaye. She had no "manners," so to speak; she had "wild ways;" and she was unconventional—a sin which would have been past redemption in the coterie of Madame de Rambouillet. It was the habit, for instance, Miss O'Meara tells us, when their chief guests dined in the Rue du Bac, where Mary resided with her mother, for these *amis de la maison* to take "forty winks" after dinner. This they accomplished in their arm-chairs, when Mary slipped off her shoes and curled herself up on the sofa.

The afternoon receptions, however, were conducted decorously, though simple and unceremonious. At these, Madame Récamier

would sometimes appear in her close-fitting blue velvet and her white satin hat with long marabout feathers curling to her shoulder.

Among the intimes of the Clarkes, the Manzonis occupy a conspicuous place, and Flauriel one entirely unique. During his life, Mary rejected all inducements to marry; he was her one great love. Thiers also was one of the habitués of the Rue du Bac. De Torqueville, Guizot, Cousin, Augustin Thierry, Constant—in fact, all the cleverest men of the day. Julius Möhl, the eminent Oriental scholar, haunted the house for years, and, in the end, when Flauriel had died, and Mary had rounded her half-century, he obtained her as his wife. He is wittily described by a Frenchwoman as "deep as a German, spirituel as a Frenchwoman, and loyal as an Englishman," a descriptive eulogy that could hardly be surpassed.

The woman who was so patiently waited for for twenty-one years, was, in her way, as original as Julius Möhl. She has her eulogy in the words of Châteaubriand: "La jeune Anglaise is like no one else in the world."

The Revolution of 1848 had been fatal to salon life, as in the nature of things revolutions must ever be. The few salons that remained, Madame de Boigne's and the Princess Lieven's, were simply political coteries, and ruled by party. In the true sense of the word they were not salons. France had with a rush developed her immense resources, and wealth was the god of the day. The sovereignty remains. "Party" ruined social gatherings.

Mary Clarke turned the opportunity to account. With the downfall of Louis Philippe began the more brilliant period of her salon. She cared very little for politics; and, although cherishing a bitter hatred to the Emperor and the Empire, she marshalled her coterie on neutral ground; and men, who had they met by chance would have scowled at each other, felt bound under her roof to keep the peace. Hers was essentially a salon d'esprit. Esprit was the shibboleth that opened her doors to all. This was the attraction. People went there simply for this.

It was a day of wild extravagance and luxury. Only those who could entertain, in the material sense of the word, could hope to hold a place in society. Yet this old woman, without rank or fortune, living in high-perched, shabbily-furnished rooms, attracted to her house all that was best worth having in Paris. By the sole magnet of her esprit she drew around her the most remarkable personalities, not only of France but of the world. Celebrities from every capital in Europe gave one another rendezvous at Madame Möhl's Friday evenings and Wednesday afternoons.

Hers was no passive reception, where the guests might look after themselves, and bore or be bored at will. She pounced upon anyone who sat staring at the company through an eyeglass, and made her company generally aware that they were expected to contribute to the common fund by talking or listening. Madame Möhl's was one of the

very few drawing-rooms under the Empire where the gentlemen did not form themselves into groups in the doorways and keep aloof from the ladies all the evening. Every man who entered her salon was expected to do his duty, and this duty was to make himself agreeable.

Madame Möhl has been accused of disliking Englishwomen. She loved and admired her countrywomen, but she could not abide them in her drawing-room. She would say: "What with their shyness, and their inability to hold their tongues, they're not fit for decent company." To a lady who asked to bring a friend she said: "If she is a woman, think well before you bring her, for of all the creatures that were ever created none does spoil society like an English lady."

Women of a far lesser intelligence have founded salons and attracted clever men by their personal beauty, but Madame Möhl's sole charm was the intellectual spell that she exercised. We are told that she took her röle as mistress of a salon very much au sérieux. In later years she became its biographer, setting out the influence exercised through it by women in France. She told of the "blighting contempt and isolation" attendant on the poverty of literary men in England, and held up the contrast of the same class in France. Thus the salon in Mary Clarke's time was a benevolent institution, a refuge for homeless literary men. Clubs, so numerous now, did not attract thoughtful, cultivated men, addicted to high thinking and plain living; but clubs are a modern institution. Sixty years ago such men had not even the option of such a resource—they fortunately never missed it—they had the salon.

In England the institution has never thriven—nothing intrinsically French does thrive in British soil—and this failure must be laid at the door, not of the men, who would only too eagerly accept the situation, but to the women, who, with us now as ever, are as singularly devoid of the savoir faire of esprit as they would be incapable of ignoring class in the interests of intellect. The Englishwoman who in this country would be held fitted to queen it in a salon must have first and foremost social degree, and, next in order, wealth; she would be expected to have decided opinions on all subjects, and, lastly, a "party." These, in the British estimation, essentials to a salon are the secret of the utter failures that have followed every attempt to root it in English soil.

Mary Clarke's court in the Rue du Bac would have been an impossibility in London; she herself would have degenerated to a "Mrs. Leo Hunter." In this London of ours we go to the play to see the actors, and the creation of the dramatist is little more to us than the call-boy's whistle. So it would be with the salon. The feast of reason and the flow of soul would be caviare to the many, and the sole attention would centre in a celebrity or two; personalities often owing their eminence to adventitious circumstances rather than to intrinsic worth.

EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF A YOUNG LADY.

JUNE 2nd.—I am alone in the house. It is the queerest feeling, but I like it so much.

Papa and Amy have gone to dine and sleep at Sir John Gray's, at least twenty miles off. Of course they took Ann with them, as she acts as lady's maid on these state occasions. And equally of course, being a state occasion, John had to sit on the driving-seat beside the coachman. And just this minute cook comes to ask my leave to—or rather to inform me that she intends to go and sit with her sick sister in the village for an hour or so. And so I am actually alone, mistress of all I survey.

If only I could have an adventure!

But adventures never do happen. I am sixteen years old, and I have never had an adventure in my life. If it were a novel, now, adventures would be sure to come; or a fairy tale would be better still. How I do wish it were a fairy tale, and that I were the princess. Well, I will go out and walk in the garden, for it is a most lovely evening; but there is no chance of a fairy prince paying me a visit, I am afraid. The more's the pity.

Nine o'clock p.m. Oh, what a wonderful thing has happened to me! What shall I do? What *can* I do? I little thought when I was writing those lines in joke, of the adventure that awaited me in the garden. How strange and terrible it has been, and what will happen next? It has only *begun* as yet, and such a beginning!

I hope I have not been wicked. I don't feel as if I blamed myself, and yet I am sure that when I tell papa he will be angry with me. But what could I do?

I really could not—could not—help it.

I was walking on the gravel path at the end of the garden when someone jumped over the hedge. I was so startled, and thought directly of my fairy prince. But it was not even a gentleman; it was a lad of nineteen or twenty, dressed as a sailor. His complexion and hair were very dark, a sort of mahogany colour, and a glance told me his features were handsome. I thought he was like a Spaniard, only I don't know whether Spaniards ever have blue eyes, and his eyes were certainly blue. I never saw anyone so out of breath, or look so frightened and hurried as he did when he saw me.

He quite jumped back from me even as he alighted; but the next moment came up to me, and said vehemently, in a sort of panting way, as if he could hardly draw his breath:

"Young lady—will you help me? They will soon be here. If

they take me I am a lost man. Will you save me? For heaven's sake say yes."

"What *can* I do?" I cried.

He was so agitated that he could hardly reply.

"Hide me—take me in there," pointing to the house, "and hide me somewhere—anywhere—quick, quick, before they come. A minute more may be too late. Hide me till they are gone!"

There was an agony of supplication in his tone. His face was one prayer. He looked ready to fall, to die.

What ought I to have done? I am sure I don't know. What I *did* do was to bid him follow me, and then run swiftly through the garden, into the house and upstairs.

There I paused a moment to reflect. But reflect as I would, I could only think of one place where he might be hid safely, and from which I should be able to let him out unseen, if cook returned.

I led him through Amy's bedroom into mine, which opened out of hers. In the recess by the fire-place is a long press made by large doors put in front of it. One of these doors fastens with a bolt inside, and the other with a lock and key. I unlocked this one, made him get in and go to the far end beyond the other door, with half-a-dozen dresses hanging between him and the place he had entered by. I desired him to stay there as quietly as possible, and said that I would let him out when it seemed safe to do so.

Then I went down stairs into the drawing-room, feeling as if I was walking in a dream, sat down at the piano and played loudly and noisily. It seemed to me the only thing I could do, I was in such a fever of fright.

Who were the "they" that he expected to come after him?

The question was soon answered. I saw policemen walking up to the front door. Some of them dispersed about the grounds, and two rang the house bell. I let them ring twice before I opened the door.

"What *do* you want?" cried I, my heart beating till I was nearly blind and deaf. "*Everybody* is out—servants and all."

"Beg pardon, miss," said one of the men, "sorry his reverence is not within—for we must go all over the house. Will you have the kindness to show us the way?"

"No, indeed. I am sure my father would be very angry. What do you want?"

"Don't you be frightened, miss, but it's a young man we're after, who was *seen* coming down the lane, so he must be somewhere about the premises—for there is nowhere else he can be. No harm shall come of it, and we'll take the greatest care of you; so don't you be frightened. But it's a bad business, and have him we must. And we can't lose time either, so please show us the way."

And I did. I took them everywhere—all over the house: kitchens, offices, cellars, sitting-rooms.

"I suppose you don't want to go upstairs?" I cried. But they told

me he would be sure to hide in the most unlikely places, so they went.

All through the bedrooms then, and at the very last, Amy's room —and mine!

Every now and then a press or closet was fastened and could not be opened, and this was the case with the long press in my room, of which I had the key in my pocket. They asked me if this, too, was locked up, and I said yes. Then one of the men said: "Do you know where the key is?" I opened a drawer while I answered: "You see it is not here. My sister keeps her dresses in it, and she will not be home till to-morrow."

"All right, miss," said the policeman.

Oh, how I hope I was not very wicked. I did not tell a lie, but I equivocated; and I have always despised equivocation, and maintained it was worse than lying when Amy said it was not so bad. I will never, *never* again wish for an adventure.

At last these dreadful policemen went away, and I have sat down to write an account of what has happened because I do not feel able to do anything else. They said they were going to Lypton; and I suppose I must give them plenty of time to get there, and not leave the least chance of their coming back, and that I had better not let this troublesome young man out for an hour.

Hark, what is that?

The sound of wheels on the gravel! What *can* be going to happen now? *Not* another adventure, I do hope.

Good gracious! It is the carriage come back, and papa and Amy in it! What can it mean?

June 3rd.—I am writing in bed. I was too ill to get up. They have left me alone, telling me to go to sleep. It is easy to tell me that, but I doubt whether I shall ever sleep again. I can't read, I can't keep quiet. Thinking is dreadful, and I will try if I can write down all the terrible things that happened last night. I will begin at the beginning, and if I can, I will put everything in order just as it occurred.

Papa and Amy came in. Papa looked so white and stern, he frightened me. Amy was crying bitterly, and when she took her handkerchief from her face, it seemed as if she had cried without ceasing for hours. My guilty conscience immediately suggested that they had found out what I had done and had come back immediately. I was a goose to think it, but I was so frightened. Papa angry, and poor Amy shocked and miserable, and all because I had hid that sailor. I stood up before them and could not say a word. Papa put his arm round me and kissed me.

"Don't be alarmed, my poor Lucy," he said; "we are well and safe. But something very dreadful has happened; so dreadful that I hardly can bear to tell my dear little girl. Poor—poor Sir John ——"

He stopped—quite overcome. I had never seen my father like this before. He was always so self-possessed.

"Oh, what, papa? Is he ill?—dead?"

"He is *murdered*," replied my father, speaking with difficulty. I screamed.

"When we got there all was in confusion and misery. He had been shot dead in the wood by a young sailor, with whom he had words about poaching and trespassing in the morning. The scoundrel attacked him and shot him."

"Oh, papa!"

"The diabolical villain has escaped, but the police are in hot pursuit, and he must be found. They have traced him to within a few miles of the coast here, and he can't escape them. He will be taken and hanged for his horrible crime. That is in one way a consolation; but his punishment will not bring back our poor friend."

What was happening? I grew hot, then cold, a deadly sickness came over me, all so suddenly; then the room moved. Papa's voice got farther and farther away, the floor slid off from under my feet, and I knew no more. No more till something cold fell on my face, and I thought they were cruelly waking me out of a heavy sleep from which I *couldn't* wake, while the mere attempt to do so was great pain.

At last I could see again, faintly and dimly. Papa was leaning over me. What was it? What had I done? Was he angry?

"Forgive me," was all I could say.

"Poor darling," said papa, very kindly. "The shock was too much. I ought not to have told you so abruptly. You fainted, my dear. Go to bed now, little girl, and sleep off the horror of it all."

I was very much surprised to hear that I had fainted.

"Don't talk to Amy about it," continued papa, "but both of you go to bed."

Go to bed? Yes—and the murderer was concealed in my bedroom!

However, papa's word was law, and Amy and I kissed him and went upstairs. We entered her room.

"I can't sleep alone to-night," I cried, passionately. "I must sleep with you, Amy."

She looked dubiously at the size of her bed. "Yours is larger, Lucy," she said. "I'll sleep with you. We shall both be better for company."

"No," I cried in despair, "I can't sleep in that room. This is nearer papa's, and I'll stay here."

My will was stronger than Amy's, though Amy was older than I; and, as usual, I had my way. Amy slowly took off her dress.

"I'll hang it up in the press," she said, wearily.

"Oh, no, no," I cried, "put it on a chair for to-night. Never mind it, never mind it!" and I wrung my hands. Then Amy undressed and went to bed, and so did I. I suppose if I live to be a hundred year old I shall never forget what I suffered last night.

Papa's old friend, whom, however, I only knew a little, *murdered;* shot dead in the wood. That was horror and grief enough. And yet, just then, that really seemed almost the smallest part of my misery.

What ought I to do? I had hidden the murderer. I, little Lucy Lee, had hidden a murderer! I shuddered when I thought he was a living man, in the next room, hidden away among Amy's and my pretty dresses. What ought I to do? Ought I to tell papa? To tell him was, of course, the same thing as giving the man up to be hanged, and I shuddered and wept where I lay, until Amy said: "Poor child! do try to go to sleep."

I stuffed the sheet into my mouth to prevent my screaming aloud. No, I could not do it. I might be wicked, but if I was wicked I could not help it, and wicked I must be. I should get up when the house was quiet in the depth of the night, when all good people were asleep, and let him out. I was obliged to do it, I could not help myself: I *could* not give him up to be hanged.

One o'clock, two o'clock struck. Amy, the soundest of sleepers, was in that heavy slumber that follows long crying. I rose softly, put on a few clothes, my dressing-gown over them, and a shawl wrapped round me. I went with bare feet, as I feared the sound even of slippers. I caught sight of myself in the glass as I passed by. My hair was all hanging about me, and I looked so pale and scared I should not have known my own face. I required no candle, for a large, beautiful summer moon poured its light over everything.

I dared not linger or delay. If I did I felt that all my courage would go from me; ooze out at the end of my fingers. I pushed the door open between the two rooms, and entered mine.

On my dressing-table lay my own little Bible, on the title page of which, in round, childish hand, was my name written, "Lucy Lee, from her dear papa, on her tenth birthday," and in which I had read night and morning for six years. With sudden impulse, I caught it up and held it in one hand, while with the other I unlocked the door of the press.

"Come out," I whispered, very low.

Suppose it was a dream and there was no one there! Alas, it was no dream. He came out. How wretched and forlorn he looked after having been for hours shut up there with hardly air to breathe. I put my finger on my lips, and he followed me noiselessly, his shoes in his hands, through Amy's room, who never stirred in her sleep. If she had waked then, and seen him and me gliding along at the foot of her bed! We went on down stairs and into the kitchen.

Then I spoke.

"I shall let you go," I said—my voice sounded to me quite unlike itself—"and I shall give you my Bible." I put it in his hands. "Promise me to read it. Oh, please repent your dreadful sin, try to be good, and pray—and—and read the Bible I have given you."

I hardly knew what I was saying. How he looked at me, poor, wretched creature—so young, and such a sinner!

"I think you are an angel," he said, "you beautiful child. I should like to kiss your bare feet as I would those of a saint on a shrine. I *do* promise you I will read your Book. I have been a bad fellow, but I will go and sin no more."

I was trembling with fear and emotion while I softly unlocked and opened the kitchen door and said: "Go away. God help you. *Please* go away."

He looked at me just once more and said: "I shall never forget you," and then he was off like an arrow from a bow.

I relocked the door with a great breath of relief. It was over. He was gone, and I went back into the hall. As I entered it, the opposite door, which is that of papa's study, slowly opened. I gave a loud scream, and the next moment my father stood before me, a candle in his hand. I trembled from head to foot, but could not speak.

"Lucy!" cried he in astonishment.

Still I could not utter a word.

"Lucy, what brings you here? What are you doing? Your feet are bare. You will make yourself ill. Is she walking in her sleep?" he added hastily, and held the candle before my eyes.

How ghastly he and everything looked, the broad moonlight pouring down on us, and the wretched little candle held up between him and me.

"I can't help it, papa," I found I said, but I did not know what I meant.

"My dear child, you are feverish and excited. I believe you don't know what you are doing or saying. Go back to bed at once. Don't stand there catching cold. Why, what have you done to your foot? It is cut—it is bleeding!"

I looked down at my foot, and indeed there was a great cut there, and I had left a track of blood behind me. I must have cut it against something on the kitchen floor.

"Does it not hurt you, Lucy?"

It was only at that moment that I felt it did; till then I had not even known of its existence; but I discovered now that it was throbbing and smarting.

"It hurts very much," I said pitifully, for I cannot bear pain.

"My poor child, what were you doing in the kitchen?"

"I can't tell you, papa. Do you know that the police were here last night, and searched the house?"

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, yes, they were. It is quite true."

"Why did you not tell me before?" he cried, sternly. "Do you mean that they were searching for this wretch?"

"Yes. It was all so dreadful, I never thought about that, and only remembered it just this minute."

We had reached Amy's room door while we talked, and papa kissed me and bade me tie up my foot in a handkerchief and go to bed at once. He woke Amy, and told her that I was feverish and had been wandering about the house, not knowing what I did, and that she must look after me and take care of me.

To-day I was so ill they would not let me get up.

June 4th. I was so restless and miserable I could not stay in bed yesterday evening, and this morning I came down to breakfast. I don't know how I managed to drag through the day. It was horrible. No one who came to the house spoke of anything but capturing the murderer, and the greatest fear was expressed that he had escaped in a boat, and been carried off by some of the smugglers about the coast.

"Only, bad characters as they *are*," my father said, "I don't think they are bad enough for *that*. They would have given him up."

I felt then how wicked I had been. I had done worse than papa believed smugglers capable of. I had never seen him so angry or stern about anything. His one desire was to have the criminal punished, and his eagerness in assisting in the search quite astonished me. I was afraid to look him in the face.

In the evening we were at tea as usual, when the post came in. There was a letter from papa's old friend, Mr. Wilson, which drew off our attention for a short time from the one engrossing subject. It told a sad story of how he had discovered that his eldest daughter had formed an engagement with a young officer without his knowledge. He was a man of bad character, and she had given him up now and her father had forgiven her.

"Wilson is a better Christian than I am, I fear," papa said, "though he is not a clergyman. I should find it hard to forgive either of you children if I found you had deceived me in anything. Thank God, I can trust you," and he looked at us very lovingly.

I stood up on my feet; despair was in my heart; I felt as if I were going to die, as if I *must* die. I could not bear life any longer. I rushed up to him, knelt down and looked in his face. I was trembling all over, but I could not speak a word or shed a tear.

He lifted me on his knees and held me in his arms very tenderly.

"My dear child," he said, "do not excite yourself so; you will seriously displease me if you do not try to control yourself. This must not be. We have all of us power of self-control, and ——"

But even as he spoke I had fainted on his shoulder. The second time I had fainted since that dreadful night. When I knew anything again I was in bed, and there they have made me stay; and I believe they have sent for a doctor to-day; and my head aches so I won't write any more.

June 25th.—I have been very ill with a fever, and this is the first day they have allowed me to amuse myself by writing, but I am getting well now. I have been reading my journal. They say the shock of

hearing of Sir John's murder gave me a fever—a nervous fever they call it. They little know how much more reason there was for my illness than the one they think sufficient. I do not wonder that fear and suspense and remorse made me ill.

The murderer has escaped. It is more than a month now, so he must be safe. And I have made up my mind to tell papa. I can't bear the misery and remorse of deceiving him, and when he comes and sits by my bedside every morning and reads to me and chats, it almost breaks my heart.

I don't know whether I have committed a crime and broken the law, or whether the lawyers can do anything to me. I believe what I have done is called misprision of murder, but I am not sure. I don't know whether I can be put in prison or transported, or whether papa can be heavily fined and ruined. I cannot think he will consider it his duty to give me up to justice; but perhaps he will say I am very wicked, and will send me away from him. I am crying so much I can't write any more.

July 14th.—I think I am strong enough to write down what happened yesterday. Papa came in as usual after breakfast and gave me a kiss. I thought, perhaps that is the last kiss *like that* he will ever give me. He read to me; and I tried to gather strength from what he read to do right, and make my confession.

When he had finished, almost before the last word had been uttered, I was so afraid of my resolution giving way, I said: "Papa, I have something dreadful to tell you."

He just looked at me.

"I have been wicked, and I could not help it; and if it was to do over again, I should be just as bad."

Then he said very gravely: "You are talking wildly, Lucy. Everyone can help yielding to temptation, if they take the right way."

"But I don't think it was temptation; it was nothing pleasant: I did not want to do it. It was dreadful, but I did it, and I am not sorry that I did it; and I know I should do it over again. Papa is it not hard that such things should happen and we should not be able to help them?"

The stern look I knew so well and dreaded so much had come into my father's face, and I hid my eyes from it.

He answered me very gravely. "If you will tell me what you have done, Lucy, I shall be better able to point out to you how sinful it is to speak in this way."

Then my courage left me. He was angry already, though he knew nothing; what would he be when I had made my confession?

"I can't tell you," I cried.

"You *must*," he replied, with an air of authority. "I am extremely displeased at what you have said, and I insist on an explanation."

I trembled; but I was powerless. I could not set my will against his.

"Do you remember," I said at last, "the night of—the—murder—when you came home?"

"Of course I do," with the same grave displeasure.

And of course he did, it was a stupid way of beginning.

"Papa, the murderer was in my bedroom press."

He took my hand hastily and felt my pulse in an alarmed manner. Then he sat down. He looked quite pale, with horror in his eyes.

"In your bedroom press?" he slowly repeated.

"Yes," I cried, and I poured it all out to him. I told him everything. How the sailor had come to me in the garden; how I had hidden him in my room; my terror when he told me of the murder; my dreadful thoughts in bed when I was undecided how to act; and how at last, I took the man down into the kitchen, gave him my Bible, let him out through the back door, and then met papa as I was returning to my room.

He walked up and down the apartment as I spoke, and he never interrupted me to say a word; but was silent all the time. It was better so, and I poured out my whole heart to him.

After I had finished he was still silent and continued his pacing up and down. Then it became hard to bear. He was judging me; what would my sentence be? I dared not say a word in extenuation nor utter an entreaty for pardon. I knew a fault must be repented and, if possible, atoned for, before papa would listen to the offender. I knew how stern he could be, how severe, and yet how kind and how just. At that moment I loved him as I had never done yet, at that moment when he might be going to send me from him, as too wicked to be his child, or a companion for Amy.

At last he spoke.

"This is a very sad story, Lucy. You have passed through a terrible trial, and I pity you very much. You must try to calm yourself, and to be as little excited as you can, for you are not at all strong."

"Oh, papa, papa; will you love me still and not send me away from you?"

I was crying so much that I could hardly speak. He leant over me and kissed me.

"I will not send you away, my child, and I do love you. But I will not allow another word to be said about it at present. You are too much agitated, and will make yourself ill again. Some day when you are stronger we will talk it over together, and see where you have been wrong and how you could have acted differently."

He kissed me again and left me. Dear, kind, good, tender father, how can I love you enough?

August 21st.—I have been very slow in my recovery but I am

nearly quite well now. Papa never spoke to me again about the murder till to-day, but we have just had a long conversation on the subject. I hope I shall feel calmer and more at ease. I sometimes think of it all till I don't know what to do. I feel as if I had left, not my childhood only, for I am not a child now, but my youth behind me on that fatal night; as if I could never be light-hearted again.

Well, after a little talk about it, papa asked me if I knew I had broken the law of the land? This frightened me; but I said I had never been sure about that, and I asked him if I had been accessory after the fact, for I had some idea that that was what I had done.

He told me that by the law every subject was bound to give up a criminal, and could be punished for not doing so. And then he said that my act had placed him in the most painful position he had ever found himself in during his whole life. He explained to me that being a magistrate as well as a clergyman, he owed duties to the government; and that, after much serious thought, he had made up his mind he should be neglecting these duties if he kept this matter a secret. Accordingly, he had written a statement to the Home Secretary, who was a friend of his, to the effect that on the night of the second of June, a young sailor, who was believed to be the murderer of Sir John Gray, had been concealed in his house for some hours by a member of his household, a girl of sixteen. I believe I gave a little scream at that. He had been kept, he continued, a whole fortnight in cruel suspense before the answer came which relieved his mind, for the Home Secretary had evidently no intention of advising him to take any steps in consequence of his letter.

"In consideration of your recent illness and state of nervous weakness, Lucy," he went on to say, "I saved you from the knowledge of what I had done till the illness was over. But for that I should have told you at first, for when people take a great responsibility on themselves, as you did, I consider that they ought to bear the consequences, whatever they may be.

I thanked him earnestly, and then pondering on his words I exclaimed: "But it would have been a much greater responsibility to have had him hanged!"

"My dear, in that case, had you refused to harbour him, you would have taken no responsibility on yourself at all; you would simply have done your duty, and obeyed the law of the country you live in. You did not know whether he would be hanged or acquitted or pardoned; but whatever happened it was nothing to you; your duty was to obey the law. The minute you heard my story of the murder you should have told me."

"But I fainted."

"You recovered; you are not fainting still; you were not fainting when you let him out through the kitchen."

"And if he had not repented—if he had been—hanged unrepentant?" I shuddered and hid my face in my hands.

"That may have been the very means intended to bring about his repentance, and he may now be leading a life of sin—adding crime to crime—and making pardon and penitence more and more difficult. But with all that you had nothing to do: you had no right to look forward—the duty—your own duty—of the moment—was all you had to deal with."

"I am sorry that I can't be sorry, papa. *That* troubles me now. I know he won't be hanged, and you have forgiven me, and the lawyers won't do anything to me, so I am much happier; but I am sorry that I am not sorry. I *can't* repent having saved a man's life. And it puzzles me in my prayers, for I can't pray to be strengthened another time to get a man hanged, or to be made to repent that I did not let this one be hanged."

"You are not likely to be tried again," said my father, drily; "such a circumstance does not happen twice in a lifetime. But I'll tell you what you can do, you can pray to be forgiven your sins, whatever they may be, and for strength to sin no more. Do this in all sincerity, and don't trouble yourself with analysing your thoughts and feelings. It has been a very hard trial for a young girl. Try and do your duty for the future, and don't think more about the past than you can help."

"Dearest papa, I will try and do everything you tell me with all my might; and you won't be vexed that I can't be sorry. Perhaps when I am older," I added very thoughtfully, "I may think differently about getting a man hanged. I am but a girl now, you know. I will follow your advice, and I like it. I will try to do right and not worry."

Papa kissed me. "Good girl," he said. "I will not expect more than that from you. Perhaps if we are both of us alive twenty years hence, you and I may talk over this matter again."

"Twenty years! Good gracious, papa, I shall be six-and-thirty, so frightfully old to talk about anything!"

Papa looked a little grave. "Oblige me, my dear, by not saying good gracious; it is very unladylike."

I blushed and begged his pardon. Papa is very particular, but I think I like him all the better for being particular.

June 19th.—Westbeed. Two years have passed since that terrible occurrence. I am eighteen to-day. I remember when I thought it would be quite old to be eighteen; *too* much grown up, even when I considered to *grow* up the most desirable thing on earth. Eighteen to-day and as much a girl as ever, and no longer thinking that to be *twenty* is to be old. Yet things have happened that might make me feel how time passes, and what momentous events it brings with it. Amy is twenty, and is as soft, tender, placid and sweet, as young and

girlish as ever. But Amy is engaged to be married, and even that does not make me feel old.

We have come to the seaside for the summer, a gay watering-place as well as a pretty one. Fred Langley is with us; it is a delightful neighbourhood for lovers' walks; we are all as happy as possible. We arrived late to-night, and to-morrow I expect that perfect happiness will begin. I have not stayed at the seaside since I was a child, and I know I shall delight in the rocks and the sands and the pebbly beach. I took one walk out, though it was almost dark when we arrived, just to hear the pleasant sound of my feet crunching among the stones.

June 20th.—I have had a sort of a shock to-day. But I must try not to let myself be influenced by it. It would be inexcusable if I allowed any of the nervousness of two years ago to return on me, now I am strong and in good health.

I ran out, full of spirits, before breakfast this morning—the lovers were not up yet, more shame to them; lovers should be for ever enjoying this beautiful world; and as a matter of course I was standing as soon as possible on the light foam that rested on the sands, marking the line from which the waves had just retired. I inhaled sea breezes, I smelt sea smells, I saw sea sights, I heard sea sounds, I was happy!

Suddenly I saw a boat being dragged down near to where I stood, dragged down by four sailors. Their dress and something about them sent a thrill through me. And then, one man turning round, I beheld a dark thin face, with a pair of blue eyes in it, and the thrill came again. A perfect shiver, horribly intense; the kind which creeps over one, coming one knows not why or from whence, at the call of a ghost story that sounds *too* true.

And was it not for a ghost that I felt it now? A ghost coming back from the dead days of the past?

I do not suppose that dark-faced, blue-eyed sailor is the lad I hid two years ago. He is not as tall, I think, as that lad was, and he looks older than he would be now. Besides, what can be more unlikely than that he is the same? I have an idea, too, that Sir John's murderer had sharply-cut, handsome features, and the man whose blue eyes looked at me over the boat this morning, though rather good looking, cannot be said to have such. I have no thought that it is the same; indeed the notion is simply absurd; but I am vexed to find that the mere fact of his sailor dress, dark skin, and blue eyes possess such power over me. I did not think the impression made by that night's adventure was so deep.

June 24th.—I have battled with my fears, and look undaunted in the face of every sailor that passes me. When that one frightened me the first day, I found, to my surprise, that I had no clear recollection of the features of the murderer. He was rather tall and thin, I am nearly sure—looking a mere lad. He had a mahogany skin,

and light blue eyes, that sparkled or seemed to do so, perhaps, in contrast with that dark complexion, and I have an impression of a handsome face—but that is all. Yet if it were not that I feel a conviction that if I saw the man again I should remember him suddenly and entirely: I declare if it were not for that conviction, I should say that I could not take my oath that the sailor at the boat was *not* he. But of all the improbable things on earth the most improbable is that he and I should ever meet again. The man, if he is alive, will take care never to return to England. He would get employment abroad, and not set his foot on these shores, where he would for ever be in danger of his life. I *know* I cannot see the man again, and I must not be such a goose as to let his ghost haunt me.

Sept. 1st.—I am going to-night to my first ball. How I have longed for my first ball ever since I knew what a ball meant. How I have longed to accompany Amy, when charmingly dressed and looking charming, she has issued forth with Lady Freeman, who always acted as her chaperon, to the few dances our neighbourhood affords. And now my turn has arrived, and I am in great luck to come in for a ball here.

Sept. 2nd.—Such a happy evening. I never enjoyed myself so much. Nay, that is saying little—I never knew that there was such enjoyment to be had.

I made a great discovery, and an extremely pleasant one. I knew that Amy was pretty, but I had not an idea that I was. In fact I never thought about it. I cannot understand now, how it was I never thought about it—but I never did. And last night, all of a sudden, I found out that I was one of the belles of the room. "The pretty Miss Lees," were talked about everywhere, and I was called the prettiest! Of course that is nonsense, for Amy *is* prettier than I am, but still it was delightful, and such a surprise. And though I never thought about it before, I find that being pretty makes life twice as pleasant as it was! I was dancing all last night, and I could dance all to-day for mere joy.

We were dressed alike, in white, filmy gauze robes, with red roses in our hair and on our breasts. The rooms were brilliantly lighted and full of pretty people and dresses. Everybody was kind, and cherished and made much of me because I was young and at my first ball. Everybody seemed pleased to look at me, and glad to see me happy, and then, by and by, I found out the pleasant secret that I was a pretty girl. I danced with agreeable men and good dancers. But the evening was about a quarter gone before *the* event happened, and the pleasure became ever so much more than at first. It came about in this wise.

Mrs. Chiston, at whose house the ball was, said to me, laughing: "Here is another man who *will* be introduced to you, Miss Lee. Mr. Chiston says his arm is nearly pulled off by questioners asking who you are."

I felt myself blushing and smiling with pleasure as she murmured her introductions, of course inaudibly. I think I only heard the name of one man out of all the many strangers I was introduced to last night, but what's in a name? A man with any other name can waltz as well, and this nameless one waltzed the best of all.

He is the handsomest man I ever saw in my life. Tall, with broad shoulders, and strong, well-knit frame. A thorough Saxon, with fair complexion and hair, statue-like features, and an expression that no sculptor's hand ever yet bestowed on statue's face; all sweetness and manliness; with that slight melancholy in it that is irresistibly bewitching because it speaks of a higher order of mind, with aspirations that earth cannot satisfy.

I think if I had not by this time discovered that I was pretty, the way in which this man looked at me would have told me. There was admiration and more even than admiration in his eyes. It was a beautiful expression that I cannot define or put into words, but which was, I think, due more to the goodness of his own heart than of his face. And somehow it was an expression that made me feel at home with him at once. It was as if he had been always looking for something that he had found in me, and that he was content now he had found it. He was as agreeable as he was handsome, and he had that peculiar power about him that made those whom he conversed with agreeable also. I felt that I was at my very best in my talk, and that feeling joined to his evident admiration, enhanced all my pleasure. After dancing with him I did not care for any other partner. I grudged every waltz I had to give away from him owing to engagements I had formed before we were introduced. I gladly shirked some of them to sit out with him. I was full of joy when we strolled together in the garden under the soft, kindly moonlight; and I was almost too happy when his manœuvres succeeded and he managed to secure me for the dance before supper, notwithstanding my previous engagement to everybody else.

Yet all this time I did not feel as if I was flirting, nor did it occur to me that anyone else could consider that I was doing so. There was a seriousness in his manner and a melancholy in his face that to my mind raised our intercourse far above flirtation. Not that I thought this consciously, for truth to say, I did not think about it at all—I simply enjoyed myself—and I did that more than I had ever done in my life before, and in a different way.

It was only when Fred Langley said to me as we returned home: "Well, Loo, you *have* been going it—you have done the business of that poor young man for him," that any idea beyond simple happiness almost unconscious of itself, crossed my mind.

I am very fond of my future brother-in-law, but at that moment I thought him stupid and vulgar and wished he wouldn't.

Sept. 3rd.—Another day of enchantment. My nameless hero was at the picnic we had been invited to join, and he never left my

side all day. Amy was not well, and, of course, Fred the devoted stayed at home with her, and papa hates picnics. I was, therefore, in Mrs. Chiston's charge, which was the same thing as being in nobody's charge at all. She at once turned me over to my new friend when she found he wanted me, and was too busy talking herself to attend to anyone else's affairs.

I think a picnic is much better managed than a ball, because at a ball people surround you directly and write their names on your card; and, do what you will, you must dance with more than one man; while at a picnic, if one man wishes it and manages well, you can belong to him all the time, and that in a natural sort of way and without making yourself at all particular. My hero *did* wish it and managed uncommonly well. By the end of that long, blissful summer day I felt as if I had known him all my life, and that that life was glorified by the knowledge. Oh, what a day it was! Were skies ever so blue before, or will the shadows from the trees ever lie again with such exquisite grace on the grass? I inhaled joy with every breath I drew.

We talked about everything. He has travelled a great deal, and travelled with his eyes open, and he is full of talent and taste. I should not be in the least surprised if he is a man of genius, and yet I never found it so easy to talk to anyone before. He seems to like everything I say, and to find something better in it than I knew the words expressed. I could not make out if he has any profession, and to this moment I do not know his name.

But that amuses me so exceedingly that I would not learn it on any account. I have carefully abstained from asking the question of anybody. It is so delightfully incongruous to feel more intimate with this man in two days than with most of those I have known all my life, and the height of all is, that I do not even know his name!

He knows mine, so he has not the same pleasure that I have, and perhaps he is so wise it would not be any pleasure to him. He calls me Miss Lee and once or twice Miss Lucy Lee. I wonder what his Christian name is. I don't much care about his surname, but I should like to know the other.

All that's bright must fade,
The brightest still the fleetest,
All that's sweet was made
But to be lost when sweetest.

And so this blissful day came to an end, and we parted. He held my hand in his to say good-bye. His fingers closed round it. Why is the touch of some fingers so different from that of others? I never before felt a thrill run over me at the clasp of any hand. He pressed mine so softly that I more knew than felt that there was any pressure at all, and he whispered more than said, "Do not forget me."

Forget him! as if that were possible! Why, I shall remember him as long as I live. Has not my acquaintance with him changed, in some strange manner, my whole life, giving me a sort of feeling as if I had never lived before, dividing that life into two halves: one half containing eighteen years, the other two days—and the little half, all in all!

I trod on air as I ran up stairs to Amy's room. She was in bed, but much better, nearly recovered from the slight cold she had caught, and eager to hear an account of my day. First telling me that she had had a "good time" with Fred, though papa had insisted on her going to bed early.

I told her everything, and she listened with smiling interest; but even while I was in the midst of my happy story I was called by papa. He had just had a telegram telling him of the sudden dangerous illness of my Aunt Elinor, whom we had left in charge of the Parsonage during our absence. It was necessary that we should return home by the first train next morning, and I must set to work to pack up my things and Amy's also, and she must get a good long night's rest to make her fit for the journey to-morrow. This was all so unexpected and startling that it left me hardly time to think about anything; but when I kissed Amy and bade her good-night, she whispered softly in my ear: "And what about never marrying now, Lucy, as you used to say in the days gone by? What about nobody ever being so good as papa?"

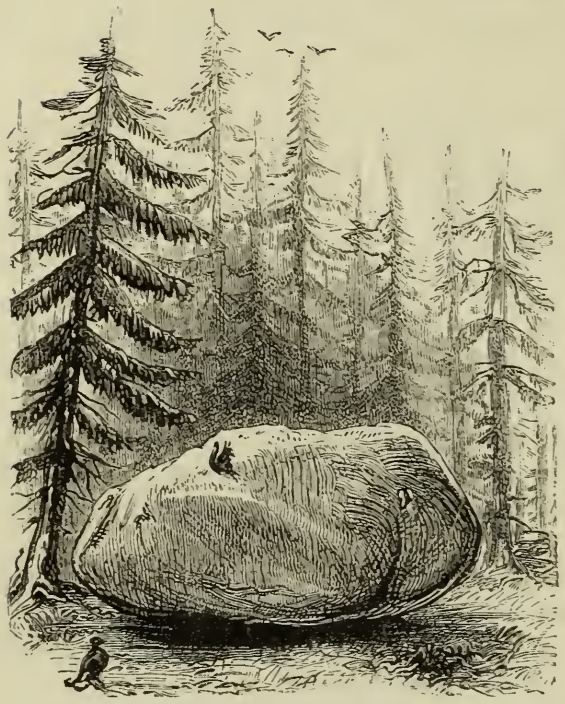
I stared in her face utterly astonished. What could she mean? What possible connection was there between her questions and anything that had happened? Then as the meaning flashed suddenly upon me I grew angry and blazed up into wrath.

"As if it could make any possible difference," I cried, full of indignation. "Why should I marry? Of course I never shall. Is not papa just the same as he ever was? Amy, I am ashamed of you." And I marched out of the room, my head in the air, and went to bed in a rage.

(*To be concluded.*)

UNDER NORTHERN SKIES.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," &c.



A Rocking Stone.

SVANIKE seemed the most spirited place we had yet seen in Bornholm. This by comparison. No place in the little island is really noisy or enterprising. Svanike is built almost upon the sea. Water, deep enough to float a large vessel, came up almost to the very doors of the inn. Only a few yards off was the harbour; one harbour within another, built in fashion peculiar to itself; the outer harbour stretching in crescent form, like arms meeting in friendly embrace. There was just room for a vessel to pass through the opening, and no more. Beyond, the deep sea stretched far as sight could reach; and for ever resting upon it, that white cloud, the little island of Christiansö: another harbour of refuge, similar to Svanike, but still smaller and of less reputation.

That evening was an important one for the little place, and it was seen under excited circumstances. An excursion boat was coming in from Copenhagen, bringing a small army of visitors for a twenty-four hours' sojourn. This was not welcome news. Excursionists were evidently not to be avoided, even in the remote ends of the earth. The hotel was in a fermented condition. Our landlady was encumbered with applications for rooms, and two unexpected arrivals caused her cup of perplexity to overflow. But possession is nine points of the law. "J'y suis, j'y reste," said Dumas, when the official tried to turn him out of his dark closet. Strong measures, however, were hardly necessary in this instance. Our ladylike and obliging hostess had no intention of consigning us, who were first on the scene, to other quarters. The excursionists were not even in sight.

There were Runic remains in the neighbourhood, and we went in search of them. The little town was hilly, but the streets were straight enough as far as the regularity of the houses was concerned. Away from the shore everything was quiet. We passed the churchyard, and went into the church. It was plain and unadorned, cold and cheerless, as are most of the churches in these Northern latitudes. Whitewashed walls, high-backed pews and narrow seats; windows guiltless of colour. The sun streams in, but it is always white and glaring. There is no dim religious light in their services; no appealing to the imagination; very seldom anything attempted even in the way of oratory. Cold are the voices, often hard and metallic. The soft whispers which thrill the emotions, and the sympathetic tones that touch the heart are rarely heard. They are banished as unhealthy influences which do not carry with them the essence of Divine life. It is as if these colder climes threw a chilling mantle over the hearts of men, repressing outward emotion. Calm and dispassionate are they, for the most part. Everything has its good side; and perhaps the good here is that these Northern races are not carried away by enthusiasm. They are slow, but thorough. In their religion they have no revivals; no mission weeks to raise them to a fervour which too often passes away with the occasion, leaving the last state worse than the first. What they profess to be they are, consistently and constantly; but they do not make great professions.

The graveyard at Svanike was loaded with flowers. You might almost have thought it decorated for a special occasion, such as the bridal of a favourite village-maiden. It was not so. The people of Svanike, Northern race though they might be, had evidently warm hearts and retentive memories. To them the graves of their dead were holy. The still voice was yet heard, the invisible hand still beckoned. At a newly-made grave where the sod was green and tender, two young girls in black were stooping, working with trowels and planting flowers. There was a sad look in their eyes, and tears overflowed. They were quiet and subdued, and watching those pale, patient faces and quivering lips, one might say that here, at any rate, was no want of sympathy or deep emotion, but an evidence of those profound waters of affection that run silently. They were both pretty, lady-like and refined, dressed as ladies might dress, with close bonnets and well-fitting gowns, well put on; evidently sisters, and so much of a size, height and age, they might have been twins.

The graveyard was itself an evidence of the prosperity of Svanike and its pretensions. Tombstones and monuments abounded. Hitherto, in the small churchyards, modest wooden crosses had chiefly marked where the dead rested, green mounds and daisies, and the blue sky above. Here was the town element and influence. It did not look half so calm and restful. But there was more to occupy the attention, and many of the epitaphs were curious. The abundance of flowers, cut and growing, took from the place its gloom, and one

might almost have said, cheerfully: "Here I, too, would rest after life's fitful fever."

We left one graveyard only to pass to another. Through a long, straggling street, uphill, and far less interesting than the scene we had just been contemplating, we came to a wide tract of barren country, ending in a long stretch of flat coast, where the sea rolled over a sandy beach; rolled and broke and surged. Desolate, stony-looking ground, where the grass was brown and burnt by the sun. A little further on was the field of Runic stones we were in search of. Here, again, we were in the presence of a long past, a prehistoric age. At once we stepped into an ancient world. A great plain, on which were many Runic monuments, some still upright, some fallen from their high estate, like heathen Bethels come to grief—a great, desolate graveyard. If these stones marked the resting-places of the dead, here they had lain for countless ages, ever in sight of that mighty sea with its sad burden of sound. But interesting as was this spot, so full of antiquities and the thoughts they conjured, it had none of the charm of Louiselund. Here were no groves and circles, no trees to cast mysterious shadows. Everything was open to the sky, the free light of the sun and the free winds of heaven, the wide expanse of water, and all the barren and unromantic lands around.

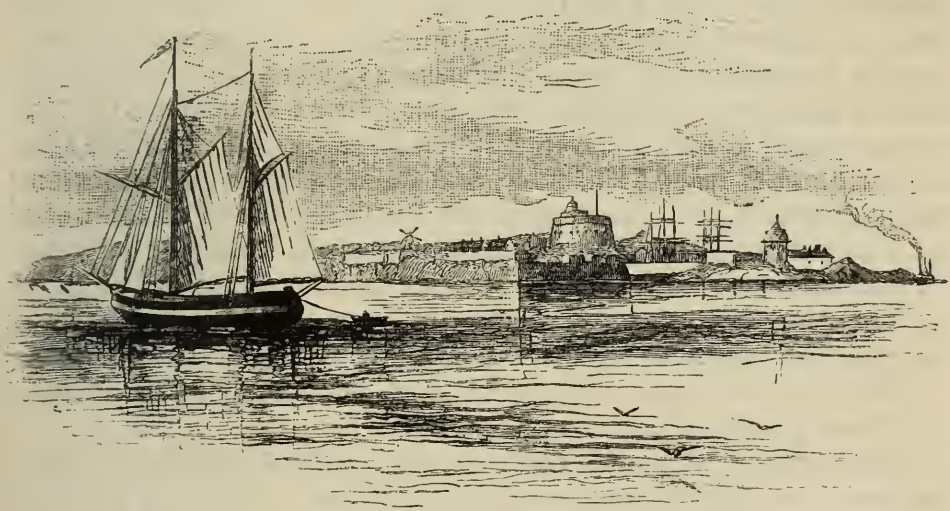
We stayed long, making seats of the fallen stones; huge and coffin-shaped some of them, ripe and ready for a museum. Stayed and listened to the surging of the sea and its everlasting song; tried to realise what this spot had been in the lost ages; what times and cycles and centuries had passed since rude hands had raised these monuments; what the world had then been, and what it would be when another such period had elapsed, and man had outstripped all our present bounds of ordinary and extraordinary wisdom and knowledge.

We left the Runic field, with its melancholy influence, and went back to the town. The quay was in a state of siege and excitement. Everyone had turned out to see the steamer, now coming in. It was evidently crowded, and one trembled for the peace of the town. But it turned out that the greater number on board were going on with the boat to other fields and pastures. Allinge was favoured with only a small portion. The landlady found she had rooms and to spare. The boat was going round to Rönne and other places, and to-morrow would return for those left here to-night.

A goodly-sized steamer, looking, in this small harbour, like a giant in the hands of a pigmy. As long as she remained, she was subjected to a very close inspection from the natives, glad of any small event to vary the monotony of their lives. After an hour's stay, the bell rang thrice, gangways were withdrawn, and she departed, almost as crowded as when she came in. At the end of the little pier we watched her steam away, ploughing up the water, and leaving a long

trail behind. Right and left might be traced a long line of coast; rocks gradually rising till they became high cliffs. In the immediate neighbourhood, the coast was flat and slippery, and brown rocks, with seaweed and great pools of water, looked suspicious territory.

We crossed them, with slippings and slidings and hair-breadth escapes, occasionally turning inland amongst small, poor fishermen's cottages, where the old wives stood at the doors knitting their everlasting stockings. Very barren the ground looked, on these sea slopes, though there was a struggle for some sort of cultivation going on. Poor and dilapidated were the cottages and the old wives, ragged and very happy the young bare-legged children, that ran wild—for whom the everlasting stockings were evidently not destined. Quite a colony apart from the town seemed these cottages without the



CHRISTIANSO.

boundaries. They seemed to have no part or lot in the prosperity of the little place. The steamer that had come and gone, the daily annals of the place, brought no change or excitement to their lives. They had only to do with their own colony; their small mutual interests, narrow as their little circle; wide as the tragedies that too often await those who go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters. Their hopes and thoughts lay in their husbands and sons and brothers; in the fishing-nets they helped to make or mend, whilst the stocking rested awhile on the shelf; in the fishing-boats, which put off day by day, or night by night, wind and weather permitting. Toilers of the deep; workers of the sea.

We were driven back by the terrible smells that came across these slopes and cuttings and flat, slippery rocks. No doubt they are wholesome, or the neighbourhoods would be desolated, and man cease to be; vultures would haunt them for a time and then fly to other regions. But wholesome or not, they were too much for us, and

sent us back to Allinge. Even there the air was not perfumed with lavender, yet the place seemed clean and well arranged, and the people were civilised. There was quite a commercial feeling about the place, as if its inhabitants went in for work and activity and reforms. Gardens bloomed about the little houses, and trees overshadowed them. It was quite the most advanced place in Bornholm. Here, in the middle of the town, you were within sight and sound and reach of the pier and harbour, centres of attraction ; but at Rönne you had quite a long walk through those primitive, deadly-lively streets before reaching the sea and the shipping.

The sea walks at Allinge are very fine and interesting, especially when you have passed beyond sight and sound of all inhabited region. Or you may take boat, and paddle about the coast, and inspect the rocks and caves, those grand bulwarks of Nature, so wild and impressive when seen from their base, and the sea tosses your boat about, and throws its spray back in your face. In fine weather, with a steady breeze blowing, you may sail across to Christiansö, and inspect the little place, with its fortifications, that are no longer needed. You may sail round it, and discover that the distant cloud no bigger than a man's hand is really formidable, and quite as much green as white. And if the wind drops suddenly, and the worst comes to the worst, it is a harbour of refuge, and its simple people will make you welcome. But the boatmen about here are weather prophets, and, as a rule, if they are willing to take you out, they are pretty sure of being able to bring you back again. Like all other seas, the Baltic has its share of storms and tempests ; but in summer the weather seldom breaks up without warning.

In quiet times, when the hotel is pretty well deserted, and excursion boats are not running, a sojourn at Svanike must not only be bearable but charming. The landlady, Frau Munthe, makes you excessively comfortable. She is quite above the ordinary type of hostesses, has a charmingly quiet voice and manner, and refined ways. For Bornholm it is a very exceptional hotel. Whole families often come from Copenhagen and other places, and stay here for the season.

The sitting-rooms were very pleasant. The sea rolled up to within a few yards of the windows, and stretched out and away in all its expanse and beauty. Sea breezes blew in with life and healing on their wings to all who came from crowded, enervating towns. We felt their influence while lounging at the open windows long after darkness had fallen, and the stars had come out, and the sea was a great invisible expanse, mysterious as the heavens above. We listened to the constant plashing of the water, and watched fishing-boats putting out, until nothing remained of them but their lights. Far away was one solitary bright light, like a distant star or planet : the gleam from the small lighthouse of Christiansö, that on many a tempestuous night has enabled storm-tossed vessels to reach the safe refuge of its haven.

The next morning we entered upon our third and last day's drive, departing when all the freshness of the early hours still lay upon the earth. Not without regret we bade farewell to our hostess, who so singularly combined comfort with simplicity. But there was still much to be done and seen, and we were almost as far from Rönne as one could be on this little island.

To-day's experiences were different from any that had gone before. The sea coast was abandoned and our way lay across the island. The character of the scenery was changed. Hitherto we had journeyed through flat country, very fertile and flourishing, but only wooded here and there near the shore, as at Dyndalen. The scenery was now undulating, and, approaching the interior, beautifully wooded. There were long tracts of forest land through which roads had been cut; wild and desolate almost as an American prairie. At length we reached Almindingen, our morning's resting-place.

An inn in the very heart of this tract of forest land; miles and miles, as it seemed, from any other human habitation. A rude, rough inn, where they give you of their best in the way of fare, and put you up for the night if need be. But if you found yourself alone in an upper room at midnight, shrouded by gloomy trees, your nerves set thrilling by a moaning, murmuring wind amidst the branches, instinctively you would lock or barricade your door. The people of the inn are rough and humble as their surroundings, but they looked honest and willing. Probably they would not have molested you even with doors and windows wide open all through the dark hours. At midnight it must be weird and thrilling enough; at midday it was simply delightful—Eden; Arcady.

Before reaching it we had passed through roads cut out of this beautiful and solitary forest; wild woods and tangle and undergrowth to right and left. Trees sometimes overarching, so that we entered from the sun's glare into restful and luxurious shade. Again, there were plantations of firs, which threw no shade upon the hot, white road, but kept it selfishly for themselves. You might plunge in amongst them and be cool, but the roads between were sandy and glaring. The drive seemed endless. The island appeared suddenly to have expanded to wonderful dimensions. Its aspect was totally changed. We could hardly realize that we were still in Bornholm. Much as we had enjoyed the driving of the last two days, the waving fields of golden corn, the hay-making and the scented clover, all the multiplied signs of prosperity and abundance, this change was inexpressibly grateful. All this green was so soothing to the eye. Had it come first instead of last in the excursion, it would not have seemed half so delightful and refreshing. Beautiful as it was in itself, wild and desolate and limitless as these wooded solitudes were, it was the contrast with what had gone before that made the change stand out with strange and startling effect.

Finally we turned, as it seemed, into the very heart of the wood,

and lo, mysteriously as Jack's beanstalk, which sprang up in a night, we stood before this solitary inn. A large building in its way, roughly furnished. Rooms where nothing but your own footsteps echoed on the bare boards, tread lightly as you would, and where very little light ever seemed to penetrate. But that was the fault of the trees, or the architect, not that the people loved deeds of darkness.

Whilst our humble fare was a-preparing—their resources seemed limited to the farm-yard, and the chicken presently placed before us was even then cackling and laying its plans for the future—whilst, then, murder was being committed and our fare was under process of dressing, we went forth to see the wonders of the valley.

The walk led to Echodalen, the most lovely forest walk imaginable, in unfrequented paths, through the very thick of the forest trees. Now we stood on a height and looked down wild and richly-wooded slopes, made musical by a shallow stream. Wild flowers and fruit abounded—not a few of the trees bore ripe red cherries—until the downward path ended in a long open valley, where cattle grazed, and the stream ran murmuring with cool, refreshing sound. On one hand, deep forests tempting one to stray out of the right path; on the other, abrupt and precipitous cliffs, bare of everything but moss and time-honoured lichen; the only rugged signs of unproductive nature in all this luxuriance of wood and vale and pasture. This was Echodalen, though we never found the echo.

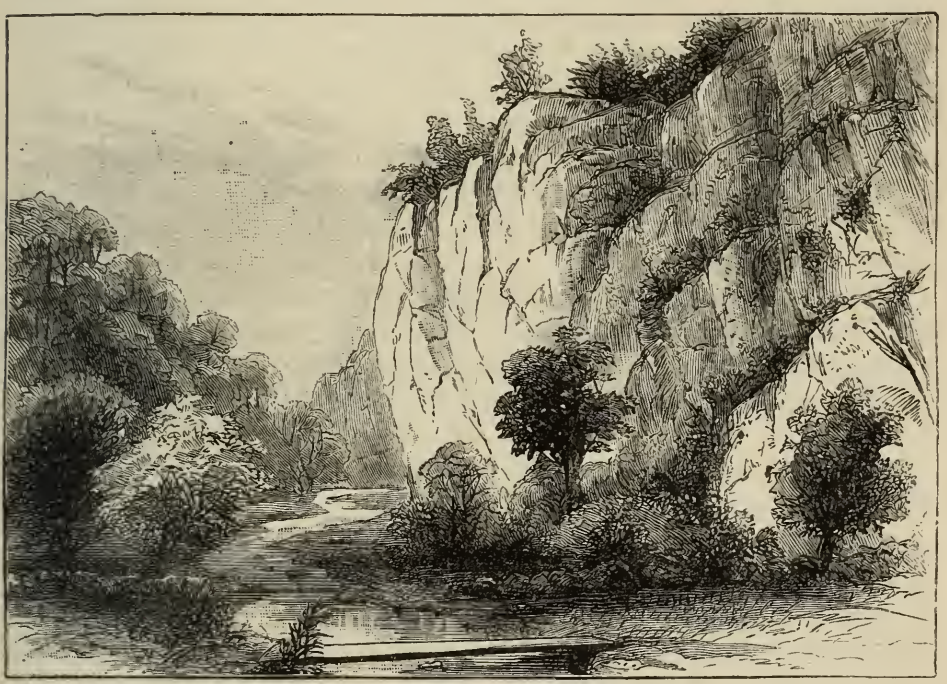
We went up the steep cliffs, still in the shadow and shade of the endless woods. We were utterly alone, no sight or sound of life, and trusted to chance to take us back to that lonely inn, where by this time our chicken had had its destiny cut short, had sung its swan's song. Ever ascending through the limitless forest any number of specimens of ferns and wild flowers, known and unknown, were at our command, if we could only have preserved them.

At last a tower on the highest ground, and a glorious view from it. The whole of Bornholm seemed disclosed at one glance. All the waving fields of corn, the distant ruins of Hammershuus; all the landmarks we had passed; the circular churches, from a distance more warlike than ecclesiastical. And all round, the glorious sea, a shimmering sapphire sheet of water, Christiansö afar off. At our feet acres and acres of wood and forest, hills and valleys; an ocean of green, restless and waving and swaying as the distant ocean itself.

At the foot of the tower was a wide forest road, broad enough to admit half-a-dozen chariots abreast, green and mossy underfoot. On either side, the forest thicket, leading to unknown regions, or to regions impenetrable. The road was long and led out into the world, away from forest life and scenes. This was not what we wanted, so we plunged into the thick of the wood down a tempting by-path. We passed numerous cherry trees, and a ruin of which we could not

read the interpretation, romantic dells and craggy rocks that looked like ruined castles in themselves.

Presently, we hardly knew how, we found ourselves at our solitary inn. They had laid our table under the trees. It was a charming dining-room. For ceiling we had the branches of spreading oaks and elms, for decoration the blue sky beyond. Our carpet was of moss, and we had unceasing music in the free and friendly winds that rustled the leaves and sang in the branches. What mattered that the fare was humble, our couch a bare bench, our table a wooden board on tressels? What mattered that dry bread was our



ALMINDINGEN.

ambrosia and sparkling ale of the mildest our nectar? Kings in their palaces might envy us, and all those who after us shall go and do likewise.

After this feast of chicken and this flow of ale, we still had leisure. Jehu evidently appreciated his quarters, for he declared that we might yet linger for an hour or two. We were nothing loth. The charms of Rönne a hundred times multiplied could not compare with these wild and solitary woods. So we wandered away into by-paths, lone and unfrequented. Sylvan glades, bird and squirrel haunted. Snake haunted too, for every now and then, gliding and writhing through the moss, we saw, with a certain thrill, a green creature raise its small head and shoot out a forked tongue, and then hurry away to its hole. E., strong young Norwegian though he was, could burn the student's midnight oil, and grow familiar with the Classics, but could not grow accustomed to the sight of a snake.

Whenever and wherever we came across these small, creeping, dangerous looking vipers, the effect was the same. He would stand and tremble and turn pale, and seemed spell-bound and powerless. Happily they are only too glad to get away from you, and will not attack you unless first meddled with or alarmed or trodden upon by accident.

And what vitality they have in their small bodies. I remember once, walking through the beautiful grounds of Robert Were Fox, of Penjerrick—whose Reminiscences in the Journal of Caroline Fox have given pleasure to so many. He and my beloved late Rector of Falmouth were having an eloquent and animated discussion, to which I was listening with the delight of appreciation and the veneration due from youth to age. It was not given to many to be often in the company of two such men of the old school, and my dear Rector is now almost the last of his race : courtly amidst courtiers, the counsellor of prelates and the intimate of kings. As we walked we came upon one of the gardeners looking curiously at a hole in the ground.

"What have you found?" asked the master of Penjerrick.

"Well, sir," said the gardener, "I'm fairly puzzled. I chopped a snake in half just now, as he was springing into his hole. The first half jumped down, and the second half jumped clean after it. If I hadn't seen it, sir, I should have believed it impossible." This was delivered in the broad Cornish dialect we will not attempt; and we left the man still looking into the hole, as if he expected the snake to reappear, whole and undivided.

To return to Almindingen. We escaped all contact with our natural enemies. Wandered through the forest glades and lingered beside quiet pools, and came upon two trees that had wedded and become one—an oak and an ash—so that looking upward you saw a mingling of two kinds of leaves, apparently on the same branch. The silence and solitude were perfect. We met no one, and apparently had the woods to ourselves. Time passed, until we felt that we must linger no longer. Jehu evidently was of the same opinion, for on returning to the inn, we found that he had harnessed his cattle, and was making the place echo with whip cracks. We left with sorrow. The honest people came and wished us a pleasant drive; the fowls in the barnyard were chanting a requiem over a missing member—a poultry wake in a far-off land. We passed under the spreading branches, and the carriage bowled away silently over smooth, soft turf. For some distance we still found ourselves in forest scenes. Then all passed away, the last glade, the last tree. We looked back with regret—as we so often look back in life. Four hours of unspeakable pleasure and delight had passed amidst these solitary and sylvan glades. We should have no more like them in Bornholm.

Once more a scene of fertility and abundance. Waving cornfields, and barns receiving wagon-loads of hay; great storehouses for future

use. We passed through Aakirkeby, the only inland town or village we had seen: the only one, I believe, that exists in Bornholm. It was singularly quaint and pretty. Its houses were nearly all painted rose colour, and many of them stood singly, dotted about the land outside the boundaries of the village. They were quite large and flourishing, standing in gardens blooming with great tree-fuchsias and blazing with geraniums, whilst roses and old-fashioned flowers scented the air. The delicate colour of the houses seemed to throw a feeling of endless festivity over the place, as if it was reserved only for the pleasant sides of life—les beaux jours de la vie. The church was old and singular; but the sexton, away haymaking, had been too wise in his generation to leave the doors open.

A boy from a chemist's shop went off in search of him with the greatest readiness. It took him at least a quarter of an hour to find the absentee. When he returned we were anxious to thank and reward him for so much service and civility. But the lad, coming down the churchyard with the sexton, who was blacksmith as well as haymaker, seemed to divine our intention, and with a delicacy which did him honour, he took off his cap and slipped away through a gate on the other side. How such natures go direct to one's heart. Just the lad and just the nature one delights to encounter, and would like to uphold and advance through life, and do one's best to keep unspoiled by the world. We saw him no more, but he dwells in the memory for ever.

The haymaker, sexton and blacksmith in one, advanced with his great keys and an apology for his absence. He could not be in two places at once, and everyone went haymaking who could do so. He threw wide the doors, and pointed to some Runic stones in the porch; how there, or why, or when, no one knew. There was an old font with Runic inscriptions, roughly carved, but interesting for its antiquity. The small interior was cut up by pillars and arches and arcades, all whitewashed like every other church in this part of the world; but built, the old blacksmith declared, of black marble. There were some extraordinary head-dresses upon the communion table, fearfully and wonderfully made, reposing in front of lighted candles. The old man gave us a reason for their being here rather than in a museum of antiquities. I forget his reason: a burial, or a bridal, or a penance: I think the former. They belonged to the most illustrious lady of the neighbourhood, and were to be there for a certain number of days.

The square tower had four stories, and of course we mounted them all, a narrowing, suffocating experience. The old sexton threw wide the creaking shutters and let in daylight upon darkness, whilst we looked upon the world around from the four points of the compass. The quaint and lively village at our feet; Rönne on the one side, our beloved Almindingen on the other, with its forest groves and glades; Svanike, which we had left that morning. Quite a far off time

it seemed, so much had we since seen and done. In the distance, and hardly distinguishable, were the ruins of Hammershuus. We wondered how the Frenchman who had held a cow reception had fared, and how far he had gone on his travels. He was taking things quietly, and perhaps was still at Hammershuus, meditating amongst the ruins. Or he might even have reached Hasle, and be making acquaintance with its brown people. The old sexton pointed it out, but all shades were lost in the distance. If everything there was brown, here, at any rate, all things were couleur de rose. And if our youthful messenger was to be taken as an example of the inhabitants, they were richly gifted in graces also. But he was surely an exception to the general rule. It would be too great delight to come upon a whole community of such natures.

Yet our old sexton was an exception too, and almost courtly in manner. When we left, he accompanied us to the carriage, and stood outside the churchyard gate, hat in hand, with the unconscious attitude of good breeding, dismissing us with a bow that was quite dignified. Was he a Harmonious Blacksmith, and had his music refined him? Or was it inborn? Or are the people of Aakirkeby really and truly a race apart? The three, at any rate, with whom we came into contact were so: the chemist, his boy, and the old haymaking, blacksmith sexton.

We went our way, gradually approaching Rönne and the end of our drive. Three days to be remembered; three days of uninterrupted sunshine and happiness. An island that stands out above most others; to which we would gladly some day return, quiet and simple as are its attractions. There is a charm about it very difficult to interpret: difficult to define even whilst it is under experience. It is like a subtle perfume, ever there, yet ever vanishing. The troubles of life were forgotten; one's heart overflowed with happiness. Days passed gilded with sunshine that found a reflection in one's brain, spread a glamour over one's vision, seemed to run through one's veins. Whatever it might be, there was the influence, never for one moment absent during those three memorable days.

No wonder that we entered Rönne almost with feelings of depression. "All that's bright must fade, the brightest still the fleetest." Jehu spoilt himself and his three days' civility by charging half as much again as he had bargained for. Boots upheld him, and the inn people ranged themselves on his side. They were the only bad specimens we met with in all the island. There was nothing for it but to yield to his unjust demand. We could not dispute or fight it out; we would not let it disturb our three days' happiness. But we warned Jehu that cheating never prospers, and that the way of transgressors is hard. By this time he had the money in hand, and did not seem to mind the lecture. Perhaps he was born without a conscience, and was to be pitied. We could not examine him phrenologically, and his face was not that of a man born to evil ways. Yet

there was a cunning look in his eyes, as he went off counting his hoard in company with Boots, who for his part had a face that would have done credit to Madame Tussaud's Room of Horrors. We should not wonder if he came to be hanged some day, unless he was born to be drowned. The two disappeared in the sheds that formed one side of the courtyard, and there they evidently divided their spoil.

Rönne looked the same as when we had left it, only that then we had seen it in morning sunshine, and now the afternoon shadows were lengthening. The streets were deserted; the little square also. It was difficult to kill time.

But evening fell, and about nine o'clock we went down to the harbour. The boat was getting up steam. The pier was crowded. There was nothing but talking and shouting and demonstrative farewells repeated for the twentieth time. At ten o'clock down came the mails. A few moments after, the gangway was withdrawn. We steamed out of the harbour. The little crowd grew indistinct. Rönne fell away.

For us, Bornholm was over. A spot to remain green for ever in the memory, a treasure island. We launched out into deep waters. The lighthouse flashed its beacon long after everything else had faded. Under the stars we thought over all we had seen and gone through. The present darkness made the remembrance of all that past sunshine, those sea-girt cliffs, those fields ripening to harvest, only the more vivid and the more abiding.

MRS. DOBBS'S WHIM.

MR. and Mrs. Dobbs lived at Clapham. They were a very worthy couple, their friends said. That is about the best people will say of an elderly pair, if they are not intellectual or troublesome. Mr. and Mrs. Dobbs were neither. Mr. Dobbs was stout and commonplace in appearance, and he did not flirt with his neighbour's wife, or gamble in stocks, or live beyond his income. He was hall-marked amongst upright men, and was trustee for half his friends' children. No doubt he was a trifle heavy and prosy at times, but these are drawbacks frequently attendant on men of probity. He certainly was never tempted by impulses or inspirations of any sort either to do wrong or to become witty and original.

Mrs. Dobbs was reputed a respectable and virtuous matron for other reasons. Imprimis, she had no taste in dress; neither did she paint her face, or excite the envy and spite of her female friends by beautifying her house. She was fond of a good dinner of a solid English sort, and always wore black silk or satin gowns. Her caps were preposterous erections of lace with gilt or steel ornaments attached; and when she went to the theatre she wore a red bernouse. Truly this couple were left behind in the race of extravagance, frivolity, and eccentricity. Fashionable folks would have nothing to say to them; those who did consider them worth cultivating explained their status as "good worthy people," with a compassionate shrug or smile.

Mr. Dobbs was "something in the City," and his big office and many clerks brought in something more than a comfortable income. Yet he made no parade of wealth and kept household accounts strictly. Every evening he returned home punctually by the six o'clock train from Waterloo, carrying his fish-basket with him. Fish was better and cheaper in the City than at Clapham, and Mrs. Dobbs was particularly fond of fish. The worthy Josiah would not have spoilt her dinner for the world. She must have her salmon in season, and her red mullet and whitebait, all in due turn, of the best.

By this you will understand that Mr. Dobbs was devoted and domestic. Yet there were thorns amidst the roses of his conjugal Paradise. Mrs. Dobbs was now and again beset by spirits of unrest and discontent, and her whims at intervals caused dear, steady-going Josiah much inconvenience.

There were no children at Clarence Villa; and perhaps for this reason Mrs. Dobbs had more leisure for complaint. She practised the art of murmuring with as steady persistence as a prima donna her scales. Josiah suffered her discontents with more than the ordinary patience of an exemplary husband.

As years went on Josiah philosophically gave up wishing for an heir, seeing his Dorothy had grown portly and middle-aged. He subscribed largely to various charities, not having a legitimate outlet for his human kindness. A philoprogenitive organ impelled him towards children's hospitals. Why, said he, should not his generation benefit by his benevolence instead of they that were to come after?

Mrs. Dobbs did not, however, view such matters with equanimity. Seeing the undue and unwelcome number of olive branches round about other people's tables, she resented Nature's cruelty to herself. She therefore frowned persistently on Josiah's philanthropic schemes for other people's children. His benevolence towards orphans, foundlings, and waifs and strays was a never-ceasing cause of argument and mortification to her. Yet she did not suffer any loss personally from these charitable deeds. Not a wish remained ungranted, and cheques were forthcoming with cheerful readiness when required. She had her carriage, her servants, her milliners, and her pleasures as she listed. Josiah erected a miniature Crystal Palace in his garden, because she wished to have bananas growing. He took her to Egypt one winter, and nearly died of sea-sickness by the way, because she had been reading Eastern romances and yearned for Oriental glitter. Nothing that money could obtain was denied her. Only she had no children.

For a long time now Mrs. Dobbs had displayed no extraordinary caprice. Josiah was sailing along in wonderfully smooth matrimonial waters. But the lady's frequent absence of mind and contemplative mien might have convinced a more sophisticated man that mischief was brewing. In truth, Mrs. Dobbs was slowly hatching a scheme which she felt sure would run counter to Josiah's wishes. This lent an additional zest to her plan. She considered it a retributive scheme. She would fight Josiah on his own ground with his own favourite weapon of benevolence.

"I'm going to adopt a child, Josiah. Now, it's no use your contradicting me, because I won't listen," said the lady one evening over dessert. She spoke aggressively, cracking the shell of a walnut with decision. She had peevishly found fault with the fish and the salad, and had slapped her pug for no earthly reason. If Josiah had been rather less slow he would have opined that a storm was brewing. There was silence for a minute after Mrs. Dobbs had opened fire.

"Aren't you going to speak?" she said at length.

"A child?" remarked Josiah, dropping his fat chin into his shirt. "My love, that is surely a project requiring very serious consideration."

Mrs. Dobbs tossed her head ominously. Every inch of lace in her cap seemed suddenly to have acquired starch, while the gilt ornaments thereon scintillated fiercely.

"When I say a thing I mean it, as you know, Josiah. I have

considered that you indulge your hobbies without restraint. It is high time my benevolence found something to occupy it."

Josiah drank up his wine slowly. When he spoke again it was in a subdued tone.

"Dorothy, my dear, how often have I reminded you in the past three years that your poor sister—left a child. As I have said before, it is your clear duty to ——"

"Mr. Dobbs!" The lady rose, and swept her black satin skirts to the door. Here she paused to add: "I repeat, I remember no sister. A disgraceful marriage severed all connection of birth. I beg that you will never allude to that shameful matter again."

Perhaps the episode alluded to was well remembered of Josiah, for he sighed several times in his after-dinner solitude. He knew the madcap girl he had sheltered for many years beneath his roof was dead, but he knew, too, that her child lived, and he would fain have cherished it for the mother's sake.

In the course of the evening Mrs. Dobbs resumed the question of adoption. Josiah was a peaceable man, and he loved his wife; but this last whim was a serious one, and would inevitably entangle her in difficulties.

"I'm going to advertise at once," she said.

Mr. Dobbs looked very blank.

"I should advise you to try some other plan that would give less publicity to the matter," he said, mildly. "That would bring any amount of beggars and impostors about you."

Mrs. Dobbs looked over her crewel work in an injured way.

"There you are again, Josiah; always trying to oppose me and make my life miserable. I declare you contradict me every morning and evening about something. Haven't I told you before what a lonely life I lead? It's all very well for you, who go away to the City every day and enjoy yourself making money. You are just like all men—you are selfish to the core." With this final female platitude, Mrs. Dobbs began to whimper. Mr. Dobbs felt guilty of heinous cruelty.

"A companion might ——" he began.

The lady lifted herself from the sofa cushion and Josiah quailed.

"A companion!" with withering sarcasm, "to make love to you, no doubt, Josiah. I know their scheming ways. Didn't I have enough of Miss Griggs and her manœuvring tricks, working you braces, the hussy, and sending you Christmas cards. How dare you mention a person of that sort after all my sufferings with them?"

Of course in the end the lady prevailed, and Josiah passively countenanced the adoption. Matters were soon set in order for the fulfilment of the latest whim.

Yet verily her heart failed her during the week following her advertisement. Her lonely condition had never been so apparent to her before as when she was beset by a crew of parents and guardians

bearing some puny or blighted infant for her adoption. All sorts and conditions of men and women craved her pity for their wretched children. She was bewildered by the questions put to her, and terrified by the offensive bearing of bolder applicants.

More than once Mrs. Dobbs had to ring in her respectable butler to get rid of some insistent parent who endeavoured to intimidate her into an immediate purchase.

The result of all this was a cessation of the daily advertisement. Mr. Dobbs, of course, was not informed minutely of all that went on; though an interview with his butler one evening threw a little light on things that had occurred.

"I wish to give a month's warning, sir," said this gentleman, in privacy to his master.

"Why, now, Tinker, what is the matter? I'm sure you've a very comfortable place, with a boy to do all your dirty work."

Tinker coughed and stammered a few words before coming to the point. "Well, now, sir, to speak plain, it's along of that wild crowd of vagabonds as Mrs. Dobbs she's seeing of every day. Babies by the score, they're brought by impident rascals such as I ain't been accustomed to. One of 'em she wouldn't go out of the gate till I called the police. It ain't respectable in a gentleman's house, I do assure you, sir."

Somehow or other Mr. Dobbs managed to soothe the outraged feelings of his man-servant, and prevailed upon him to put up awhile longer with the inconveniences of the situation. The worthy Josiah was concerned for the protection of his wife.

"How are you getting on with your business, my love?" enquired Mr. Dobbs, that evening.

"Oh, pretty well," said the lady, cheerfully, yet persistently avoiding her husband's eye. "I find it very difficult to make up my mind; and I want a pretty little boy, not quite a baby, with no disgraceful connections to hang about him. No doubt I shall see one to suit me in a few days."

The few days passed without further allusion to the subject, and the following curious advertisement appeared in all the daily papers:

"Wanted, for immediate adoption, a little boy between two and four years old. Must be healthy and pretty, and sound in body and mind. The parents or relatives must surrender all claim upon him for ever. He will be comfortably provided for in the future. Apply daily, to Messrs. Griffham and Grabham, Solicitors, 201, Parliament Street, Westminster."

After the appearance of this advertisement, the persecution at Clarence Villa gradually died away, and only now and again a respectable man or woman, leading a little boy, was heard enquiring for Mrs. Dobbs's residence, of a local policeman. But the lady was obdurate to all claims made on her pity. She had hardened her heart to destitute cases; and penniless widows or consumptive fathers

met with scant ceremony at her hands if their offspring were not desirable.

After this had gone on for a fortnight or more, Mrs. Dobbs one day visited Messrs. Griffham and Grabham during business hours.

"I have come about the child, Mr. Griffham," she said, going at once to her point. "How is it you have sent me none that are pretty or interesting?" From the force of habit, Mrs. Dobbs was apt to speak dictatorially to strangers.

"My dear madam, pray remember children are not made to order."

Mrs. Dobbs winced. "I see I must expect no assistance from you, sir," she said, loftily. "No doubt my husband's opposition to my project has influenced you. I will trouble you no further in this matter. You may consider your quest at an end. Good morning."

Weary of her undertaking, Mrs. Dobbs had almost resolved to abandon her whim. She chewed the cud of bitter thoughts on her homeward way that day. Providence or fortune was against her success.

That evening Mr. Dobbs came home with an unusual degree of haste, and of a cheerful mien.

"My love," he said, tripping over the dining-room mat, "I've found a child for you."

Mrs. Dobbs looked up coldly. "It's impossible I shall like it," she said, perversely. "No one wants to part with a child unless there's something the matter with it."

Mr. Dobbs beamed yet more brightly. He was not to be subdued by any wet blankets. "It's a little boy, and he is three years old, fair, pretty and most intelligent. His father is just dead."

"What about the mother?" questioned Mrs. Dobbs, cautiously.

Josiah reddened, stammering a little. "She—ah, poor soul—is dead too. This is no beggar's brat. He is well-born, Dorothy, on one side. I can give you every proof."

The next day the child was brought to Clapham, and left at Clarence Villa by a clerk from Mr. Dobbs's office. He was poorly dressed, but a handsome little lad, lively and spirited. He was not at all shy, and addressed himself freely to the pug and parrot. The piping, treble voice, and shrill, childish laughter touched the maternal chord in Dorothy's heart. She went a little sadly that day while her eyes followed the child. He stroked her velvet gown, and fingered her rings, while he sat upon her knee, chattering about the things around him.

"What is your name?" questioned the lady.

"Harry," answered the boy readily. But nothing more could be elicited from him. He did not seem to understand that he could have a second name. He was but a baby-boy, scarcely three.

In the afternoon Mrs. Dobbs telegraphed to her husband that he must make arrangements for her to keep the child a day or two. It

would not be necessary to send anyone to fetch him that evening. The day passed quickly, with little feet pattering beside her, exploring the wonders of garden and greenhouses.

Towards seven o'clock Mrs. Dobbs began to look anxiously for her spouse's return. She had quite decided she would keep the child, but still there were questions to be asked—preliminaries to be settled. The little boy must be hers entirely. None must ever claim him, or interfere with his welfare.

Mr. Dobbs came leisurely up the garden at his usual hour, carrying his fish-bag. His stolid face changed a little when he looked through the window and saw the child upon his wife's knee.

"He is a pretty boy, Dorothy," he said nervously when he came near.

"A darling little boy. I mean to keep him, Josiah," she said, gently disengaging the chubby hands from her chain. "Will you stay with me, Harry?"

The child laughed gleefully, tossing back his curls.

"Stay with oo; pitty, pitty flowers," he cried, clapping his hands.

"Tell me all you know about him, Josiah. What is his parentage, and will his nearest relatives surrender all claim upon him?"

Josiah shifted uneasily on his seat. He had the appearance of a man oppressed with guilt.

"He is an orphan," said he, looking speculatively at his own broad toes.

"So much the better for me," said Mrs. Dobbs. "But I will not have any distant relatives hanging about. He must belong exclusively to me."

Mr. Dobbs drew nearer to his wife.

"Dorothy, he ought to belong to you, if to anyone."

The lady put down the child from her knee. His large blue eyes gazed in wonder at this sudden rejection.

"What is the boy's name?" said Mrs. Dobbs, breathlessly.

"Henry," he rejoined slowly.

"But, Henry what?" she asked more sharply.

"Henry Morrison. He is your sister's child—a friendless orphan now. God help him, if you don't."

Mrs. Dobbs fell back on the sofa cushion, and covered her face with her hands. The tears were falling through them when little fingers essayed to move them.

"Has oo been naughty? Don't ky."

Perhaps the lady was very conscious of her own naughtiness, for she cried still more at this appeal, drawing the child into her embrace.

There was never any more doubt about the adoption. Henry Morrison calls Mrs. Dobbs mother at this day, and Josiah is a little less generous towards asylums and hospitals. There will be a very pretty penny by and by for his adopted son.

H. M.

THROUGH THE WATERS.

My days are numbered now,
In pain and weariness must they decline;
And what availeth it, O Love, that thou
Wouldst give thy life for mine?

Like to the ebbing tide,
The world rolls back and leaves me stranded here;
As a lone wreck when angry waves subside,
Nor hope nor aid is near.

Now doth a mist arise
Between me and the fading things of earth;
Those transient joys that we so vainly prize,
I learn, at last, their worth.

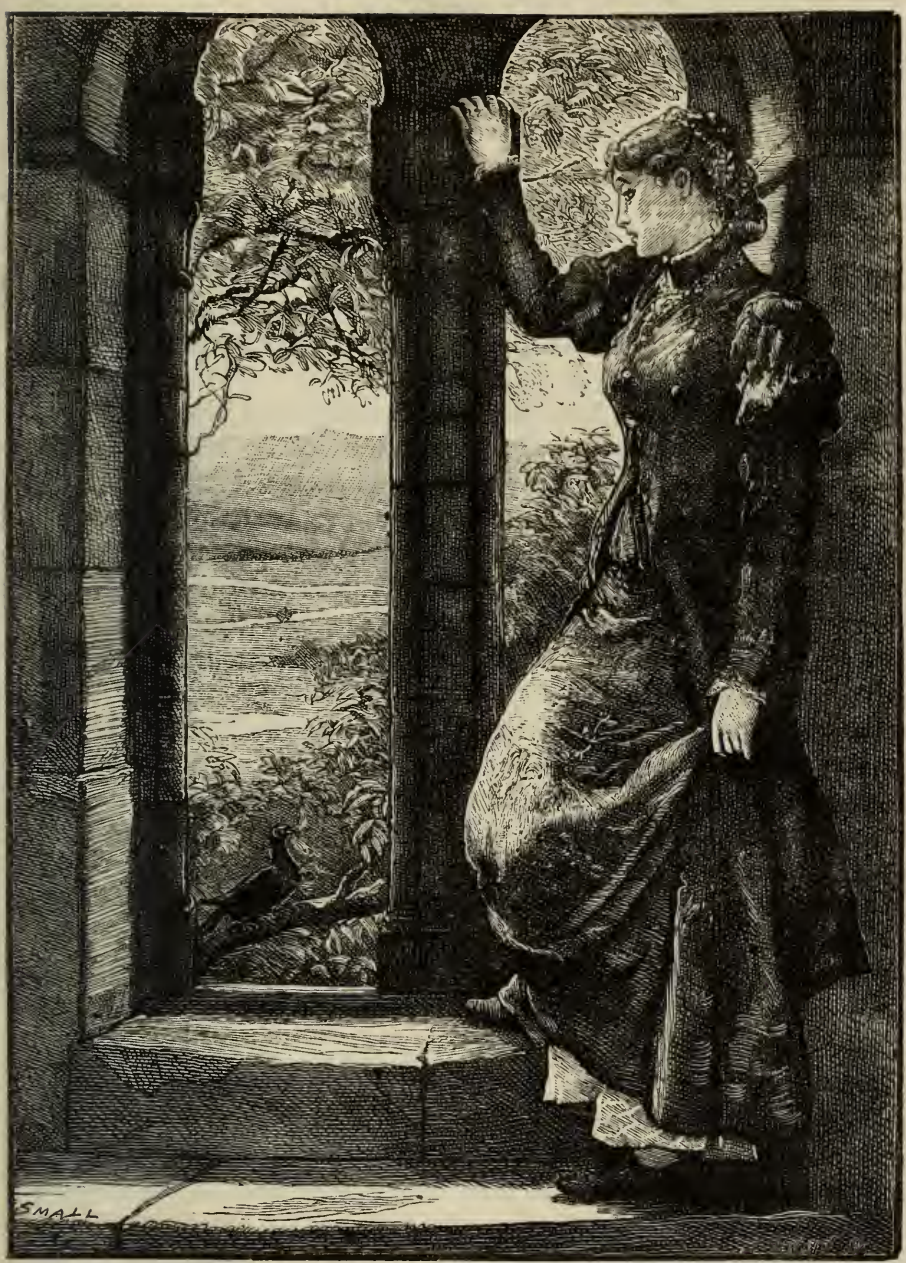
Oh, sweeter is the thought
Of every cross which, following Christ, I bore;
Of trials mine, and weary labour wrought
For His dear sake of yore.

Ah, though imperfect all
Our service, yet will God accept the same;
And what is given of our substance small
In the Redeemer's name.

Where sorrows, deepening, loom,
The valley of the shadow dread I see.
O Father, be Thou nigh, amid the gloom,
If my heart faileth me.

Lo, One, who for us passed
The grave and gate of death, hath swept away
Their terrors, and upon the darkness cast
Light from eternal day!

M. T.



Like to the ebbing tide,
The world rolls back and leaves me stranded here.

NOT YET SOLVED.

THE following is a true ghost story. It is an account of some supernatural incidents which have recently taken place in a clergyman's house situated in a favourite London suburb. They are so strange as to be thought worthy of publication, and are here given by one of the daughters of the house.

What I am about to relate is quite true in all the main facts, and I make the story known as being another of the many instances which prove that links undeniably exist between the spiritual and the material world.

There neither was nor is anything gloomy about the house. It became our home many years ago on account of its being the only available house to suit us near my father's church. When my father took the house it had been built about three years. During that time it was occupied by a Captain somebody (whose name I forget), his wife and little child, a girl. But the child had then died suddenly, it was said under very painful circumstances, and the parents were so distressed that they threw up the lease of the house and went away, and my father took it.

There was nothing gloomy, I have said, about the house. Neither was there any apparent reason why all of us children should shun a particular bedroom in it, which stood on the first landing, immediately over the dining-room, looking out into the street. It was a spacious, airy room, nothing whatever to be seen amiss with it; nevertheless, we little ones, from the eldest to the youngest, felt an unaccountable fear of it. It was in vain that our nurse and Aunt Jane, who, between them, supplied the place of the mother we had lost, strove to re-assure us, saying there was nothing to fear. We did fear the room, and could not help it.

This unreasonable fear was, no doubt, augmented by one curious fact, which had been observed from the time we first entered the house. Constantly, and more especially during the Spring and Autumn time, the stone staircase, of which the first flight was composed, and which led on to the landing of the before-mentioned bedroom, seemed to be perpetually promenaded at night by small, pattering feet, as of a small child ceaselessly toiling up and down. Indeed, on our instalment in the house, nurse, who had reason to suspect one of my brothers of the bad habit of walking in his sleep, would rise from her bed, and descend, candle in hand, with a warm shawl ready to wrap round the little sleep-walker.

The first time, not finding him, and thinking she had somehow missed him, she talked to him the next day, saying: "He might catch

his death of cold, stepping up and down them bare stone stairs." The stairs were not carpeted, owing to a whim of my father's.

But soon, to her amazement, nurse found the sounds were not caused by him; on each occasion she found him asleep in bed. But the pattering footsteps continued to be heard by all of us. After many conjectures as to the cause of the sounds, Aunt Jane and nurse ceased to talk of them, at least, in our hearing, apparently paying them no attention. Indeed, in time we all grew accustomed to them, and never gave them much thought, except when visitors were staying in the house. The sounds disturbed them, and they would now and then make a remark on the restless nature of the young members of the household, "who appeared to prefer walking up and down stairs at night to resting in bed."

But to the bedroom we never did get reconciled. As we grew older, Aunt Jane reasoned with us, saying how very wrong it was to give way to superstition and fears, especially when the fears were groundless. To this day the sensation remains with us.

Thus the years went on.

One afternoon, as we were all gathered together for afternoon tea, a message was brought to Aunt Jane that a workman, then employed on the premises, wished to speak with her. Aunt Jane still stayed with us, notwithstanding my being now old enough to take my mother's place, as far as the housekeeping was concerned. The man was engaged in cleaning out a cistern at the extreme top of the house. "What does he want with me?" asked Aunt Jane, but the servant did not know.

So Aunt Jane went out to him. On her return, she held a very long, thin, and dirty-looking chain in her hand, which the workman had discovered in the cistern, it having, he said, in some extraordinary way, become wedged into a crack at one side, from which place he had extricated it. Aunt Jane rewarded the man for his honesty in bringing the chain to her; though whose it could possibly be and how it got there was an utter mystery. She thought the chain was gold.

My two brothers, both at the tea-table, pronounced the chain to be brass, and expressed their delight that Aunt Jane had been for once taken in, and had given five shillings for a worthless article. She strove to impress upon them that she had not given the man five shillings for the chain, which was none of his, but for his straightforward honesty.

Upon taking the chain to a jeweller's to be cleaned, we learned that it was a very fine Indian chain of pure gold, and of most delicate handicraft; which only served to increase the mystery of how it got into the place where it was found, and of how long it had lain there, hidden from the light of day.

When, a few days later, it was returned to us from the jeweller,

glittering and clean, it was passed from one to another in wondering admiration, and shown to my father, who, until then, had only heard of its discovery, and had greatly pooh-poohed the idea of the chain being of any value.

"Found in the cistern at the top of the house!" he exclaimed, as we turned the beautiful thing about in our hands. "That is most extraordinary!"

"I always said this was an uncanny house," cried Ethel, the second of us, speaking upon impulse. "All those unexplainable sounds of little footsteps for ever pattering up and down that stone staircase, and the curious feeling we have all had since we were little mites of shrinking from that front bedroom! It would not surprise me if a ghost were to turn up next."

"Don't talk nonsense," rebuked my father. "We shall not keep a servant in the place if you begin to talk like that."

"Well, at any rate," went on the unabashed Ethel, "how on earth did a fine long Indian chain, such as this, find its way into the top cistern?"

"That is the strange part of it," said my brother Jack, who was minutely examining the chain. "It is of value, this chain. What is to be done with it?"

"I shall wear it," struck in Lily, the youngest of us, and consequently the most indulged. "I've just got a watch given to me, you know, and as I want a chain to wear with it, I'll take this one. If any owner claims it later, I can give it up to him."

"The question is, to whom *does* it belong?" cried Jack. "The man thought it had been in the crack of that cistern for years."

Aunt Jane, struck by a thought, laid down her knitting—she was always knitting—and turned to my father, to speak.

"I should think it must have belonged to those people who lived in the house before you had it. The chain is an Indian chain; and they were said, were they not, to have come from India."

"Yes, I believe so," he replied, "if my memory serves me correctly."

"What did you hear about them?"

"Not much," he answered. "They had taken a long lease of the house, and had been in it about three years when their little girl died suddenly. After that, they gave up the lease, and I took it."

"How did she die? What of?" asked Aunt Jane.

"I do not know. It was said that the circumstances attending the death were painful, and that the parents were so cut up at the loss they could not stay in the place. Their grief would naturally be great, she having been an only child. I think they went abroad," added he. "Anyway, that is all I recollect to have heard of them."

Aunt Jane took up her knitting again. She thought the chain must have belonged to those people: and she wondered what it was that had caused the death of the little girl.

Lily was allowed to take the chain into wear; and our busy conjectures respecting it and its mysterious discovery gradually died away.

Shortly afterwards, a cousin of ours, from the country, took up his abode with us for a time, for the purpose of studying medicine, being intended for the medical profession. He was a jolly young Englishman, not much more than a lad, with an excellent appetite, and no imagination at all. As to any superstitious tale, had he been told one, he would have laughed it to pieces.

When a certain shyness, attendant on his first arrival, had worn off, Charley became a great addition to our circle, and his proverbial good temper soon made him a general favourite.

One bright spring morning, however, he appeared at breakfast in a different mood. After sitting some time in grumpy silence, he, to our amazement, burst out with a vehement attack on practical jokes.

What absurd folly such jokes were, he said, as if *he* could ever be taken in by them! "So mind, Lena," he went on, pouncing suddenly round on me, "don't you try it on again. You know how I hate young kids of children!"

I asked him what he meant. The rest of them, sitting round, gazed at him, wondering what had come to good-humoured Charley.

"Because you may happen to have a child staying in the house, it's no reason why you girls should send it into my room in the night, just to play a trick on me."

We assured him we had done nothing of the kind.

"You must have done so," said Charley. "Dressed it up in white, with its golden hair round its face. Whose child is it? One comfort, it must have caught a jolly cold, standing all that time looking at itself in the glass!"

"My dear Charley!" exclaimed I, "what on earth are you talking about? There's no child staying here."

"Oh, isn't there!" grumbled he; "and you didn't send her into my room, thinking to startle me?"

"A little girl, you say?"—humouring him.

"A little girl about four years old, all in white, with lots of golden hair," he repeated. "As if you wanted to be told!"

"Charley, believe me: there's no little girl staying in the house; nor was one sent into your room."

"I dare say not! Why, Lena, I lay awake full half an hour, watching her. She stood by the dressing-table, looking at something in her hand."

"Did you see her come in?" I asked. I could not understand this at all. Charley was in desperate earnest.

"No, I didn't," he answered. "What roused me suddenly, I don't know; something did, and I sat up to look at my watch. It was just five o'clock; light enough for me to see everything in the room distinctly; and my eyes at once fell upon the child standing at the dressing-table."

"Charley, you must have had a dream—or a nightmare."

"I wish you'd not talk nonsense," he angrily returned. "I was as wide awake as I am now. Don't I tell you I watched the child for half an hour. When I got tired of sitting up in bed, I lay down and watched her. She was still there when I fell asleep.

"Did you speak to her?"

"Not I!" cried Charley. "I'd not give you girls the satisfaction you were no doubt all listening for, outside. If you weren't there yourselves, you had posted old nurse there, I know."

Nothing more was said then, for Charley had to hasten away to his daily work at the hospital. In fact, we got no more out of him on the subject at all. Our suggestion, that it was a dream, he would not listen to; and it took the whole household several days to convince him, or, perhaps, try to, that no child was or had been in the house.

Charley's bedroom was the uncanny room on the first landing, but we had never told him our dread of it. Not only that it would have been wrong to do so, but that we had grown a little ashamed of the feeling which yet we could not conquer.

It was, I think, about a year afterwards—and we had forgotten the occurrence—that the figure was seen again. One evening, when Lily and I, having lingered a little behind the others in saying good-night, were preparing to mount to our particular nest at the top of the house, Ethel called me into her little room, saying she wanted to speak to me. It was next to the one Charles had slept in, and faced my brother's room at the other end of the long, straight landing. The gas was burning brightly on the staircase. Jack's door stood half-open, showing that his gas was also fully on. I went into Ethel's room, Lily waiting for me outside; but a minute had hardly elapsed ere she called out quickly, in a low, sharp voice:

"Come here, Lena; make haste!"

I was reading a letter Ethel had just put into my hand, so I answered shortly: "In a minute!"

"Make haste!" she cried again. "Be quick!"

I ran out, rather impatiently, to find Lily gazing hard at Jack's door, with a strange, fixed look in her eyes.

"I have just seen the little girl Charles saw," she said, solemnly. "She was looking straight at me, dressed all in white, and she had such lovely golden hair! When you came, she vanished."

Nothing was to be seen then. We looked around, no one stirring. Ethel had joined us.

"Lily," spoke Ethel, presently, "perhaps she was looking at the gold chain: you have it on."

The chain was quite conspicuous outside Lily's dress. She repeated again that the little girl had stood gazing at her. Charles, we remembered, had said she did not look at him, but was all the time looking

apparently at something in her hand. Lily had not felt any fear. The golden hair, she declared, was perfectly beautiful.

"This is really very strange," exclaimed Aunt Jane, who, hearing our voices, had appeared on the scene to know what the talking was about. "Are you quite sure, Lily, of what you say?"

"Of course I am sure," returned Lily, who never could bear to be doubted, and was very matter-of-fact and truthful. "The little girl stood there gazing at me, aunt. She was as plainly to be seen as we are to one another."

"We were wondering, aunt, whether she could be looking at the chain which Lily has on," said Ethel. Perhaps she recognised it? You know, when the chain was found, we thought it might possibly have belonged to the people who were in the house before us." Which, of course, as Aunt Jane observed, was as much as to suggest that this little girl with the mass of golden hair might be the apparition of the child who had died in the house.

We talked of it as the days went on, suggesting all kinds of possibilities and impossibilities. As she had never appeared until after the discovery of the chain, we could but think the chain might in some way or other be connected with her, and that, if the chain had, indeed, belonged to the first occupiers of the house, the little spirit might well be that of the child who had died there. Another question we asked ourselves was: Could the chain, or its loss, have had aught to do with her death?

The story spread, and people came to see the room and passage where the little figure had appeared; but it was sometime before it was seen again. Lily was married. She had left home and taken the chain with her.

Ethel was climbing slowly up the stone staircase one Sunday evening between seven and eight o'clock, when she saw the little white figure, crowned with its mass of golden curls, peeping through the banisters on the first landing, within three yards of her. It was a cold winter evening, and the gas was burning as usual on the staircase. The passages were always kept very bright. Ethel paused, and the little figure turned its head towards her, and then vanished. It was almost as though she had been looking out for someone, but not Ethel. Ethel, like Lily, felt no fear or surprise at the time. She noticed particularly the gloriously bright golden hair.

This last appearance was seen but a few months back, and it has revived all our curiosity, wonder and interest. Whether we shall ever learn the truth concerning the little dead maiden, and whether the gold chain is in any way connected with her mysterious visits, must remain for the present a mystery.

BETTER SURE THAN SORRY.

I.

"I SHALL not tell you, then, and I wouldn't if you were to kill me!"

I almost laughed at this tragic outburst, but I was too angry. There lay the photograph on my friend's writing-table, and his sister (who also had hitherto been my very good friend) refused to tell me how he had come by it. Only a few days before, in this very room, I had confided my secret to my friend, Lewis Carden. I had told him that I loved my beautiful cousin, and that I hoped one day to hear her say my love was returned in no cousinly fashion. I had begged him to go with me to her father's house that he might see her for himself—and he had agreed to go "when he had time." Not by look or word had he given me to understand that he had any acquaintance with Mary Lyell. Yet here I found her photograph lying on his table, and his sister refusing to tell me how he had obtained it.

But for her excited manner I might not have pressed her further, once I saw her reluctance. But I felt convinced that some mystery hung round this photograph, and that mystery I was determined to solve.

"Janet," I said, gravely, and with an effort to appear indifferent, "you can avoid bringing a very serious unpleasantness between Lewis and me if you will only tell me how this picture came here. Lewis cannot possibly mind my knowing all about it."

"I shall not bring any unpleasantness between you if you make up your mind to leave it alone," she said, with a quaver in her voice which threatened tears.

"There are reasons why I cannot leave it alone," I responded. "My dear Janet, understand that. I must know this secret of yours, and if you do not tell me I must ask Lewis."

"Oh, Robert! don't do that. *Please* don't!" And now the tears were actually in her eyes.

Matters were getting worse. I pitied Janet, but every moment I grew angrier with Lewis, and more suspicious. I took up the picture again. Yes, there were the large, clear eyes, the wavy hair, the delicately formed mouth; all of which I had described to Lewis not a week ago. Perhaps my look softened as I gazed, for Janet took courage.

"Now, Robert, put it down, and tell me about the concert last night. Did Sims Reeves sing?"

"Oh, I can't stay now," I answered, hastily: "I have an engagement. Good-bye."

Once out of the house, and away from any soothing influence, I began to ponder the puzzle from a different standpoint. The facts were clear enough. Lewis must give an account of himself or must be prepared to relinquish my friendship. We had been chums at school and college, and our intimacy had continued up to the present time, when I was a junior partner in the firm of Lyell and Robinson, and Lewis Carden was supporting his mother and sisters by his pen.

The Cardens were very poor, and Lewis worked hard; but I never knew exactly what he wrote or to what other pursuits he devoted himself. He always professed to be very busy. He was a clever fellow; and we thought it was a pity that he was hampered by the care of his family; but he was always cheerful and apparently contented. I think this was, partly at least, the effect of his pride; for the Cardens were all proud. Not in an aggressive manner or consciously, but proud enough to keep even their most intimate friends in ignorance of their difficulties, if they had any. I was always longing to help my friend Lewis, but he never gave me a chance. Life might have been an earthly Paradise for all the complaint he made.

As I walked rapidly homewards, it occurred to me that Mary might herself clear up the mystery. I wondered why I had not thought of it before, and, jumping into a hansom, I drove to my cousin's house in Kensington. Mary was out, I found, but her mother received me cordially. I had every reason to suppose that Mrs. Lyell smiled upon my suit.

After the health of the two families had been satisfactorily disposed of, I proceeded to business.

"By the way, Aunt Rachel," I said, with an assumption of carelessness, "do you know a friend of mine, Lewis Carden?"

"I know his name very well. Was he not at Oxford with you?" she answered.

"He doesn't visit here?" I asked, with great, but well concealed, relief.

"Oh, no! But do bring him to see us if he would like to come. We should like to know him, I am sure."

"Thank you; I don't think he goes out much. He's a hard-working fellow."

So the matter dropped, and I left the Lyells', feeling satisfied on one point. Mary did not know Lewis. But then—but then! how had her photograph come into his possession?

II.

I SHRANK from an interview with Lewis, much as I desired to solve the mystery that tormented me. Once I thought of writing to him, but I felt that that would be cowardly. At last I wrote him a note, saying that I wished very particularly to see him, and asking him to meet me at my club. He came at the time appointed, and seemed

to have no apprehension of any interruption to our friendship, looking and talking as he always did. It was difficult to begin, but I made a plunge.

"I went down to your place this morning," I said, with an effort to be free and easy.

"Oh; I was out all the morning. Did you see anyone? They didn't tell me you had called."

"I saw Janet," I said, and in spite of my efforts my voice was solemn.

"She didn't tell me," he repeated, and waited for me to go on.

"I wished to see you, Lewis, because I am sure you will explain something that gives me some uneasiness. Where did you see Mary Lyell?"

He looked up in astonishment. "Why, my dear fellow, I never had that pleasure. You offered yourself to introduce me, but you haven't done it yet."

"I saw her picture on your table this morning," I said, angrily. "Janet refused to tell me how it came there, but you shall not refuse. I must know all about it instantly."

Carden's face was crimson. At first I thought he was going to confess, but he only raised his eyes, as I went on declaring that he must tell me all, and said, quietly:

"Don't get excited, Robert. You won't get anything out of me that way."

"I am not excited," I cried; "but I have a right to know how that picture came into your hands, and I must know. Don't try my patience too far, Carden."

"Patience isn't just the word for you at this moment," he rejoined coolly, for I had now worked myself into a passion.

I was astonished. Until now I had never really believed that Lewis had acted treacherously towards me; but I could no longer doubt. My anger was subdued into a kind of fear as I realised that my old friend was dealing thus by me. "Lewis," I said, entreatingly, "tell me where you got that photograph, and I will forgive you all. You, and you alone, know how I stand with Mary Lyell. Surely you will not refuse to tell me where you ——"

"I will tell you *nothing*," he said. "You may think what you please. I never saw Miss Lyell in my life. You had better rest contented with that."

"You don't deny that it is her picture?"

"Certainly not, if you are satisfied that it is."

I felt that this was intended to throw me off the track. "Oh, I am satisfied as to *that*," I answered, bitterly.

"Then I had better say good-morning." He rose and took up his hat. But I could not bear to part from him in this way.

"Lewis," I said, sorrowfully, "is it all over between us? Do you know that you are treating me very badly?"

"I have done nothing of which I am ashamed," he answered, looking straight into my eyes as he spoke. Then he turned suddenly and left the room.

I sat for a long time looking into the fire, and trying to make some excuse for the strange conduct of my friend. He had always appeared to me to be the soul of honour and the ideal of generosity. His own words still rang in my ears, and all our previous intercourse bore testimony to their truth. It was, indeed, but a small part of the praise he had hitherto deserved to say that he had done nothing of which to be ashamed.

Nevertheless, who could help doubting now? I had confided in him my love for my cousin, Mary, and he had sympathised with me and wished me all success. He might have asked me to let him see her photograph—if he only wished to see it. There was not the slightest connection between the two families to suggest that Mary might have given her picture to Mrs. Carden or to Janet. Besides, why had Janet been so distressed at my discovery, and why did Lewis refuse to answer my question? No solution came to me, and, with a heavy heart, I went to my work in the City.

All through the day Lewis's face kept haunting me, till I almost felt as if I had wronged him in asking for any explanation. But again and again I reasoned from the facts that I knew, and every time I ended by saying to myself: "He ought to have been able to explain. He cannot have done what is right. There should be no mystery between us, especially about Mary."

I had as yet spoken no word of love to Mary, and, perhaps, I was all the more sensitive in regard to her, on that account. I was certainly hopeful, but that was all.

III.

I was engaged to dine that evening at the house of an old friend, and I knew that the Lyells would be there. As I dressed, I tried to think only of the pleasure of seeing Mary and talking to her—perhaps of sitting beside her at dinner. In this last hope I was, however, disappointed. Mary was taken in charge by a curate, who did not look as happy as he ought to have felt—at least, so I thought.

During the slow progress of dinner, I formed the resolve that I would tell my love to Mary on the next day; and, if she accepted me, I would forgive Lewis, and forget the whole affair. I hardly spoke to her that evening, but I walked part of the way home with her father, after we had put the ladies into the carriage, and I had the happiness of knowing that I had his full permission to win her if I could.

On looking back over this period of my life, I cannot understand how it was that I so utterly mistook my position towards Mary. I might have known that her frank preference for me was the worst sign she could have shown. However, I was not wise enough to know

this, and I was cruelly disappointed when she met my declaration of love with an impersonal sympathy, as though I had been speaking of another woman. She was kind, nay, almost tender in her manner, but she was quite decided.

"I have grown up with you, Robert. It would seem such a dreadful break in our pleasant old ways."

"It need break into nothing," I interposed eagerly. "I will do anything you like if you will only marry me."

"Ah, but that is just what I could never do. Let us be friends, Robert, dear, and forget that this has happened. I will if you will."

Of course the proposition seemed monstrous in my eyes, but I was forced to admit to myself that Mary was not for me. I am amused, now, as I remember the way in which she consoled me for my disappointment. She never avoided me, and never suffered me to avoid her, if chance threw us together. Gradually I began to see that she was right; and though to this day I love her dearly, I ceased to wish that she might become my wife. We were friends, but I could not forget what had passed between us. I could not forget her strength and patience and generosity.

I had not seen Lewis Carden for more than a month, when, late one afternoon, I called at the Lyells', and Mary said:

"Do you know, Robert, we met your great friend last night, and mamma has taken such a fancy to him. She has asked him to come and see us."

Mary knew nothing of my quarrel with Lewis, and I was now in a difficulty. I could not say that Lewis and I were no longer friends without telling the reason; and I felt that I had no right to tell that. Yet I could not but feel annoyed that they had become acquainted with him, under the circumstances. I was not yet quite resigned to my fate, and had a general feeling of bitterness against humanity, quite apart from my special dissatisfaction with Lewis.

"What did you think of him?" I asked.

"I thought he looked good. Indeed, I thought you had described him very well. We said it was odd that it was not through you we got to know him, you have so often talked about him to us."

This was hard to bear. To have my own words brought up against me in this way was a trial I had never anticipated. Yet often as I had told myself that I had given up Lewis, I could not say a word against him now. I took refuge in silence, and Mary changed the subject.

A few days after, I met Mrs. Lyell, and she was full of the praises of my friend. "I am going to introduce him to Mr. Lambert, the editor of the *Piccadilly Review*, you know. That will help him, won't it. I do so enjoy bringing clever people together."

I knew that what my kind old aunt enjoyed most of all was assisting her fellow-creatures in all sorts of indirect ways. But I very much

doubted if Lewis would accept of her assistance. He had always kept an insuperable barrier between himself and the world, where his difficulties lay. As time went on, I was told of no visit from him, and, after some weeks, I one day heard Mary say to her mother: "Mr. Carden has never come to see us, mother,d ear. Don't you think he is very rude?"

"Very busy, probably," said her mother.

"Well, we won't urge him to come if he doesn't care about it. He can't possibly know how nice we are," said Mary, laughing. I was silent.

"Why do you never talk about Mr. Carden, now?" asked Mary, as she gave me a cup of tea.

"Don't I?" I answered, stupidly.

"You are always silent when we speak of him, and you never seem to go about with him as you used."

"I haven't seen him for a good while," I said. "To tell you the truth, there's a—misunderstanding between us. I think he has treated me badly."

"Oh, I am so sorry, Robert. Are you sure it is all his fault? A good friend is such a rare treasure."

"It is all his fault," I replied, gloomily.

"Do you mind telling me what he has done?" asked Mary, after a minute or two.

"I should mind very much. You would not like to know," I answered, rather shortly.

"Now you have roused my curiosity, and I *must* know. Without jesting, Robert, I don't like to hear of your losing Mr. Carden's friendship. Remember that I know of him only what you have told me, and I know nothing but good. Surely one would not give up such a friend for a slight reason."

What could I say? That Lewis had somehow obtained her photograph and refused to give any account of it? Mary would be indignant at the mention of such a thing. Yet I could not tell her anything without telling all. On the whole I found it easier to persist in refusing to disclose the cause of our estrangement than to say what would inevitably injure my quondam friend. So I told my cousin that I must decline to answer her questions, and left her under the impression that I was either unjust or harsh in my treatment of Lewis. But her words aroused in me a new longing to get to the bottom of the mystery, and to clear my friend from the undefined, but serious charge which I had myself laid upon him.

IV.

These weeks passed drearily enough. Nothing could be plainer to me than that Mary could never love me as I had hoped, and, for the time, there seemed no other hope left to me. But by degrees the cloud lifted, and I saw what a treasure I had in her steady,

sisterly affection, and realised that we were never meant to become man and wife. Mary never recurred to the subject of Lewis, and I only heard accidentally that he had dined with them. I happened to be unusually busy just then, and I afterwards went to Scotland for a short holiday. The day after I returned to London I called to see Mary.

"I am so glad you have come back," she said, with her own kindly smile. "We are leaving town in a few days, so we should not have seen you at all. We are going to Italy. Isn't that delightful?"

"Yes—for Italy," I answered. "Not for me."

"I want you to do me a favour before I go."

"It shall be done," I said, without suspicion.

"Ah, do not promise rashly. You know Mr. Carden has been here while you were away? We had the greatest difficulty in making him come, but I got papa to bring him at last. We have really gone out of our way to know him."

Here Mary stopped, but as I had nothing to say she went on with a little hesitation.

"I talked to him about you, and no one would have suspected that anything had come between you from the way in which he answered. He told me how you nursed that poor boy in Switzerland—you never told us! And what you did for the Lacys when their father died. Whatever he has done to vex you, Robert, he is your friend still, and I am sure he is worthy of you."

"You don't understand, Mary."

"I understand enough to make me long to bring you together again. Suppose we were to ask him here; would you meet him as if nothing had happened?"

"I could not. Oh, Mary, you would not talk like this if you knew all. Lewis could put everything straight if he would only tell me what I have a right to know. He will not tell me: how then can I trust him?"

"Give him one more chance."

"Let him answer my question to my satisfaction, and I shall never doubt him again. Till he does that, I can never call him friend."

"'Never' is a long word, Robert. But I can say no more," and Mary sighed as I got up to go.

"Tell me this, Mary," and I seized both her hands as I spoke. "Is it 'never' between you and me? Is there no chance for me?"

"Dear Robert, there is none. Pray don't imagine that there is a shadow of a chance. I am so sorry!"

"Oh, never mind!" was all I had intelligence enough to say. And I bade 'good-bye' to Mary for what seemed a long, long time.

They had been in Italy for six weeks, and had decided to remain a month longer, when I began to feel very lonely. I had few friends though I had many acquaintances; and of the two dearest friends I

had, one was in Rome, and the other farther apart from me than if an ocean lay between us. Mary's words kept coming back to me; and at last I determined to make one more effort to break down the barrier. I said to myself that I would offer to take back all that I had said, and trust Lewis in spite of appearances, not even asking him again about the photograph.

But my resolution was not, it seemed, to be carried out. An announcement, one morning, appeared in the papers that Lewis Carden had been appointed to the editorship of the *Piccadilly Review;* and everyone knew that the post was an excellent one. I could not, in the first moments of his prosperity, rush to him and demand his friendship on any terms. So I put it to myself, and I acted accordingly. But I was very lonely.

I watched with considerable interest the progress of Lewis's *Review.* I could recognise his own articles, and I knew that he would get on. Indeed, from the moment he took control, the tone of the publication was improved, and its standing soon became improved also. Lewis was at last succeeding. I was glad, and even proud, inconsistent as it may appear. Yet I made no attempt to see him, nor did I even write to him.

One morning, when I came down to my solitary meal, I found two letters waiting for me. One was a short note from Mary, and I opened it first. She merely said that they were returning to London, and that her mother hoped I would dine with them on the following evening. The other letter I had not looked at till I tore it open, and then, to my great surprise, I saw it was from Lewis. This was the letter:—

"My dear Robert,—My circumstances have altered of late, and it has become possible for me to make an explanation which you had doubtless a right to ask, but which I found it impossible to give. I obtained the photograph of Miss Lyell from Seidlitz, the photographer, for whom I often coloured pictures, and who was kind enough to say that I did them well. This particular picture was, I believe, presented to Miss Lyell's godmother.

"Janet's entreaties have induced me to explain this to you, and I must add that it was in compliance with what she knew to be my desire that she refused to satisfy you. I have only to add my wishes for your happiness."

The curious mixture of pride and humour which made up this letter was Lewis all over. At the time I never thought of anything but my own stupidity. Since then I have wondered whether Lewis did not "treat me badly;" not because he had the photograph and would not account for his possession of it, but because he kept from me the bitter struggle he was carrying on with his poverty. But these thoughts came later. I went at once to his office, and took his hand with feelings of shame and penitence that would have softened

a far harder heart than his. We had much to say to each other as we sat by his fire. He told me of his hopes and plans for the *Review* and for his family, and I asked many questions. Then, with his hand on my shoulder, he said:

"And how goes the wooing? Am I to congratulate you yet?"

"Oh, that's all over long ago," I said, mournfully.

"Over? Why, I thought——"

"Thought what?"

"I almost thought it must be settled. Miss Lyell spoke a good deal of you to me——"

"That's just why it's all over," I replied. "She does talk about me—she wouldn't if we were engaged. She says we are friends, and I suppose we are."

"You had better wait and try again."

"No use. I shall never try again. Mary knows her own mind, and her friendship is worth having, if I can't have her love. I think I hardly mind now. I am beginning to see she was right."

I went to my work that day with a lighter heart than I had worn for some time. It was not the realisation of Lewis's innocence that I had, half-unconsciously, ceased to doubt, but the renewal of his friendship which made me so glad. One bit of satisfaction I determined to give myself: I would bring Lewis into Mary's presence and show her myself that we were reconciled.

My story draws to its close, for it is a story of friendship and not of love. But those who have followed this narrative so far will, perhaps, be interested to hear that my cousin Mary is now Mrs. Lewis Carden, and that in my no longer solitary home there rules a small and impetuous lady whom Mary calls her sister Janet, and who is my dearly loved and loving wife.

M. L. GOW. J. SWAIN.

HE TOOK OFF HIS HAT AND STOOD BAREHEADED IN THE BREEZE.

THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER, 1886.

LADY VALERIA.

By A. MOBERLY.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"NEAREST TO HAND."

"IS that all?" asked Sir John, in a disappointed tone. "Can't you get anything more out of her?"

Elsie had been tenderly carried away and ministered to; Altcar and Eustace had departed—the latter to seek out and return with old Mr. Paramount—and Hester had vainly endeavoured to induce her father to follow their example; but the good General, devoured by curiosity, refused to budge.

First, they ought to stay and see if they could be of any assistance. Next, he wanted to hear the doctor's report. Lastly, he must say good-bye to Miss Liddell, who had at once risen to the emergency and taken the direction of the treatment, while Hester had stood by, unhelpful and unsympathetic.

"Do you mean to say you are going to let her stand here and make such a statement and never try to find out what she means by it?" he demanded, impatiently.

"My dear Sir John, what *can* we do? The poor creature is quite unconscious and may remain so for some time. She has evidently had some great shock, and the journey here through last night's storm has nearly killed her."

"But when she comes to her senses," he persisted.

"Do you think we should question her? The very last thing we should dream of doing," spoke Mary, rather indignantly.

"Oh, very well. Then I think it's a great pity she didn't hold her tongue altogether, if that's to be the end of it. Good-night, Miss Liddell; come, Het!"

"Troublesome baggage!" he grumbled to himself, descending the stairs. "Was she off her head then, or did she really do it, eh?"

"Don't ask me!" Hester spoke with a catch in her breath, setting her small, square teeth viciously. "I don't want to talk. I feel as if I could not breathe in the same house with her."

Mary Liddell met them next morning with an unpromising report. "Still unconscious, for the most part, with fits of delirium. I fear there is very little hope. Her father is here, but she does not know him. Rose and I were with her all night, and we have got a trained nurse in this morning. I wish I could stay, but they want me at Altcar. And I must go back without Rose. I can't bear to think of Esmée's disappointment." And Mary, who had her own poor little private vexations, looked wistfully for sympathy into Hester's impassive face.

"Inconvenient young hussy!" again exploded Sir John. "Making a nuisance of herself all round—and all for nothing. You don't think, Het—that Poynter—eh?—I don't wish to impute any wrong-doing to the poor fellow, but he might have encouraged the fancy?"

"Never!" cried Hester, with a stamp of her little foot. "He has never thought of her for one minute. I'll answer for it!"

"Gone mad for hopeless love, like a girl in an old ballad, then. That's it, is it?"

"Hush!" And Rose, with a wan face and dark lines under her tired eyes, came softly down the stairs to where they stood in the hall. "Don't speak so, please. I have managed to find out that she *did* know of Mr. Poynter's death—and if there were any little girlish liking—he was always so courteous and kind to everybody—Oh, Hester, if it was *my* doing, this trouble! *I* brought her here to meet him."

"It was her own folly and presumption."

"Hester! I never heard you so bitter. If you could but see her. Poor gentle little Elsie! There she lies, with those great vacant staring eyes, tossing and muttering and breaking into frantic rage if I come near her. She has turned against me—as if I had done her a mischief. And her poor old father. Remember we are all pledged to secrecy about last night's scene."

"But you, Rose. What do you mean to do?" Hester asked impatiently.

"'The duty that lies nearest to hand,'" quoted Rose, smiling composedly; "and, fortunately, there is no mistake in this case as to which it is."

Hester flung her arms round her and kissed her passionately, then entered the drawing-room.

Mr. Paramount was sitting dejectedly at the window, shaking his head sadly as Mary Liddell urged him to accompany her to afternoon service.

Hester seated herself near him, and he began to pour out anew all his woes in full measure. She hadn't the heart to check him, and

listened for a chance of diverting the stream. He got on, at last to other less painful topics; and gave her the account of the abandoned prosecution at full length.

"I shall endeavour to obtain a personal interview with the Bishop early next week," he said, with the slightest shade of his old importance; "I feel it is due to myself to set his lordship right on some points on which I may have misled him. Not that my view are changed as far as my own personal opinions are concerned, but I've learned my lesson, ma'am. The world is *not* as we old people would have it, but then it is made for the young people. It is they who fill it and they must rule it, and all that is left for us old ones is to wait patiently till we're cleared out of their way."

Hester was about to protest, when she perceived that Rose was beckoning to her softly, and she rose and left him shaking his head over the truth of his last observation.

"I want to relieve the nurse, but Elsie will not let me come near her. Can you help me?"

"I'll come," said Hester, striving against the repugnance that seemed to paralyse her.

The pretty guest-chamber had assumed the regulation hospital look of comfortless emptiness and order. From the uncurtained bed, a strange little fever-scorched face, that once was Elsie's, looked round at them from under its ice bandages. She beat the air fiercely when she saw Mrs. Damien. "I don't want you! Don't look at me! Don't let them all look at me!" she screamed to the nurse, who interposed herself and signed to Rose to retire. Elsie twitched her head, trying to see past her to Hester, who approached doubtfully. Elsie's great shining eyes never left her face till she got quite close; then she feebly extended a thin, burning hand. Hester took it gently, almost caressingly, and Elsie drew it to her cheek and held it there, muttering some indistinct words over and over to it.

"I will stay here as long as she will let me," Hester said, sitting down beside the bed. Elsie lay gazing at her with the same fixed unrecognising stare for some minutes.

"Where is he?" she suddenly demanded.

"Safe and well," answered the other, steadily.

"You will bring him to me?"

"Surely I will."

"It is the new moon," said Elsie quietly, and her eyelids drooped for a few minutes and she lay still. Then, with a start, she roused herself to demand afresh:

"Where is he? You will bring him to me?"

When the nurse returned she found her patient lying dozing, and Hester singing softly.

"*You* want to stop and nurse her?" exclaimed Sir John. "I'll be shot if I can see the fun of it. I thought you detested her. Do

you expect to find out anything from her? What does she talk about, eh?"

"Nothing of consequence. She has fancies about a bird which flies about the room and won't be driven away. Sometimes she counts the days to the next new moon; sometimes she raves about somebody she expects, who never comes. That's all."

"Well, of course you must do as you like. It won't matter to me, as I shall be at Portsmouth for some days. I'll settle it with your mother. I dare say they will all be glad enough to have you. Rather you than I though, Het."

"I believe it is the duty that lies nearest to hand," she answered, gently.

CHAPTER XL.

ON BOARD THE "BARRACOUTA."

If Elsie's cry could have been answered, what would she have seen? Looking through Edric's eyes a fortnight previously—very little. He was lying on his back, and they—at first but dimly noting things of the outer world—fixed themselves languidly on the convolutions of a corner of gilt moulding directly above him. What was it? It seemed of a part with the odd shapes and patterns that had been dancing before his eyes for a whole series of ages, or so he thought, only this one didn't move or change. Two little gold leaves, with a star between. He lay looking at it in stupid wonder, till his tired eyelids dropped again, and then re-opened to find it still there. This time he was moved to follow the lines of the gold to their end. They enclosed an oblong space, a panel in fact, but what was it? and how came it there right above him? and why was he lying outstretched, stiff and prone, powerless to raise hand or foot? He was dead, that was it. Dead! He said so to himself, quite seriously and uninterestedly the first time; then a sudden chill and horror as the thought shot through him, followed by a rush of angry blood through his veins, and he shouted aloud, and would have struggled up but could not.

He was fairly awake now and conscious, though bewildered.

It was no death torpor that numbed his strong young limbs, but veritable earthly fetters. He was bound down with some sort of strong, yet elastic, web closing round his throat, so that any attempt to rise half-strangled him. A curtain hung before him, intercepting his view of the cabin, for such it was; and the thud-thudding at his head he now recognised as being, not his own fevered blood, but the throbbing of the screw, mixed with the wash of waters outside. But how had he come there? He tried to piece the small, disjointed scraps of recollections that floated across his brain into a coherent whole, in vain. He was vaguely conscious of his wits being somewhat disorganised, and his strength unequal to any vigorous measures

of escape, so he lay and blinked at the ceiling for a little while longer, and then took note of the fact that somebody was as noiselessly as might be opening the cabin door.

He gave a shout, the best he could, and the door closed smartly; that was all that came of it.

Then he made a dash at the curtain which blinded him, fruitlessly, for the web pinioned his arm too straitly. Could he reach it with his head? No. Then he gave it up, and lay looking at the wavering green folds impatiently with gathering wrath. Once he even tried to blow them aside, and caught himself laughing foolishly at his failure. "I must be getting light-headed," he spoke, half aloud, and felt ready to cry for a minute. "Light-headed, that is it. I've had fever and they've had to strap me down. Is my hair cut, I wonder? Who's doing the musketry?" and off he went into a doze over the question, or rather, a sort of faint for want of food.

The door opened again, audibly this time, and a smart, active man in his shirt sleeves entered, bearing a tray, which he deposited on the table; and stepping to the berth, examined Edric's face closely. The result seemed to discompose him slightly. He gave a low whistle of dismay, hastily unfastened the netting, and hauling up Edric's arm felt his pulse, then his heart, then lifted an eyelid. "Run it too close," he murmured. "Yet who'd have thought of a young fellow of his build giving out like this." He got a basin of soup from the tray and forced a spoonful between Edric's lips, a second followed with a drop or two of brandy added, and presently he gave a nod of satisfaction as his patient's eyelids quivered apart and his eyes looked dully on him. He went on feeding him cautiously, and even tenderly, supporting his head on his arm. "Now, suppose you go to sleep on that," he said, as the bowl was emptied, "and don't bother to ask questions. You're all right, you'll find;" and he picked up his tray and departed with a nod of good-humoured encouragement.

Edric, perforce, obeyed him, and ten minutes later, when the man stole back again, was sleeping quietly, breathing regularly, with a natural colour on his cheeks. His visitor bestowed a look of doubtful satisfaction on him, and then deftly and rapidly drew the net back into its old position, and secured the straps and buckles that held it to the edge of the berth. "T'aint more'n we shall want to hold him when he wakes," was his comment. The waking came some hours after, and with it a rush of remembrance and fierce dismay at what had befallen him. He recollected everything perfectly now. How he had come up to town with a fixed intention not to return without having relieved his mind by a full explanation with Mr. Meynell of all his dealings with Lady Valeria. How he had pursued the banker from Seagrave Place to Queen's Gate, and thence to the City. How he had been baffled in his attempts to obtain an interview there, and had started off to dispose of his own business before making a second attempt. He remembered the feeling of dogged exasperation that

seized him when, on his second visit to Lombard Street, he found that Mr. Meynell had gone home unwell and was not expected to return that day. How he vowed obstinately that if he stayed in town all night his errand should be discharged, and the sense of impatient annoyance with which he recollected his promise to Elsie Paramount. From that point his recollections began to get confused. Did he start back again to Queen's Gate or not? He seemed to see Elsie's face of delighted welcome when he entered, and had some notion that she had prayed him earnestly to stay for a few minutes longer to see her father. She was sure that when he knew that Sampson was really going to the war he would send him his forgiveness. Had he stayed? or was that all part of some uncomfortable dream? in which he was one moment sitting at the window with the sunlight shining in through Elsie's scarlet creepers, and twinkling on the old gold and red china cups and saucers and worn bright silver of Elsie's tea-tray, and the next, cold, cold moonlight, and he was wandering forlornly through St. Fridolin's Churchyard after parting with someone—was it Euphrosyne? — under the grey Resurrection Gate. That was the last of it, strive for another link of the chain as he might. Had there been an accident that had knocked all the sense out of him? Even so, how came he here?

The curtain had not been replaced, and he could make out the details of his surroundings. A trim little cabin enough, and prettily decorated. "Could he be on board the troop-ship on his way to Alexandria?" he thought, with an instant's flash of hope. No! These bonds, these hateful bonds! and with all his new-found strength he tried to wrench the web away from his throat. He could move freely to a certain extent, turn on either side, or change the position of a limb that felt cramped, but that was all. He tried one crafty device after another, and failing each time, resigned himself to wait as philosophically as he might.

"Somebody must come in time, and meanwhile the dodge is to keep as cool and rational as I know how"—a practical demonstration of his unimpaired reason.

It was no easy task that he had set himself. He had not come there of his own good will for certain. Then he must have been drugged and entrapped on board—but how and why? Stories floated through his mind of men, who, for their chance knowledge of some dangerous secret, had been waylaid and done to death, or kept in life-long concealment. What if he were one? He shivered as he lay and thought of it. In prison at sea, too! Out of chance of escape or danger of witnesses. Once on blue water, and a knock on the head and a heave over the side after nightfall, and there would be the end of it, with none but the fishes to tell how he had disappeared from the company of living men. No, that was too ghastly a supposition to be entertained, especially in broad daylight, with the sun shining through the port-hole, and the cheerful coming and

going of footsteps overhead. There was more than that. Just outside his door came the rustle of a gown, and a voice in very un-Parisian French exclaiming "Rosita! Rosita! Viens! Papa m'a dit ——" Edric did not hear what, only a sonorous rumbling reply from the neighbouring cabin.

All was quiet after that, and it seemed a weary while to the next opening of his door, and the entrance of the same civil, dark, foreign-looking man. He gave a congratulatory smile on meeting Edric's eager look.

"Didn't like to disturb you sooner, sir. The captain's compliments, and he hopes you feel yourself better?"

"Very much so, thank you. Will you give my compliments to the Captain and ask him to look in here for a minute?"

The man bowed, and seemed about to start off at once with the message, but checked himself. "The Captain is at dinner just now. Shall I bring you some first?"

"Yes, you may," said Edric, bent on taking things coolly. "No. Stop. First tell me where I am, and how I came to be here?"

"I can't say, sir. I only came on board myself at Gravesend."

"You don't know the meaning of this?" and Edric held up a pinioned arm.

"I suppose, sir," with a politely embarrassed smile, "there was no other way in which they could keep you in."

"What did they tell you about me?" he persisted.

"You'd been rather violent, the Captain said, but you'd sleep it off, and I was to take care of you and let you want for nothing in reason. I'm sure—except for allowing you to have spirits, or to go on deck without leave—I'm willing to do everything I can, sir."

"What vessel is this?"

"The *King Malachi*, from London to Dublin, Captain Slaney."

"Dublin!" Edric breathed more freely.

"Then when you get there you'll find out your mistake," he said, as quietly as he could. "Now, listen to me—What's your name?"

"Hudson, sir. Charles Hudson."

"Then take notice of this, Hudson. I've been brought here without my knowledge and against my will. I am in my sober senses now. Look at me for yourself. I expect you to remember, and to bear witness for me some day, that the first thing I do is to protest against my being here at all. My name is Poynter, I am an officer in Her Majesty's service—you can see for yourself if you look at the letters and cards in that coat pocket—and the first thing I shall do when I set foot on shore is to go to the police and bring to punishment all who are concerned in this rascally business. Now you may get me some dinner. Can you get me out of this thing first, that is ——"

"The Captain's orders, sir. But if you won't get me into trouble

by doing anything violent, trying to make away with yourself, or doing anybody a mischief ——"

Edric laughed even while hard put to it to smother his exasperation. He gave the required parole, and Hudson unstrapped him and assisted him to rise. He felt giddy and cramped, and by no means fit for violent struggles for liberty, even if the man had not locked the door and pocketed the key, at first giving ostentatious glimpses of a revolver in his waistband.

"I should like to dress," said Edric, having had so much conceded him.

"Certainly, sir. Shall I fetch you some hot water?" was the unexpected reply.

After a careful toilet, during which Hudson proved himself an admirable valet, the dinner arrived. A knock came at the door; a fat, foolish-faced young man came in with a tray when it was opened, and scurried off like a scared rabbit as soon as Hudson had received it. Being sharply recalled to await orders about wine, Edric beheld over his head a great brawny sailor apparently guarding the door, and peering in on him, his grizzly old face alight with curiosity.

The dinner was an excellent, well-served little meal, and a pint bottle of champagne arrived, "With the Captain's compliments," while it was in progress. Edric was glad of it; he felt shaky and spent, as though by some great effort, before the meal was half over. He was feverishly anxious for the interview, though sorely dismayed to find how little hold his mind seemed to have over the facts he wished to set forth. He examined his coat-pocket and found it had been emptied of all papers, only his handkerchief remained. Two small coins—half-sovereigns—remained in his waistcoat pocket: that was all.

"I think you will find your things safe in the Captain's hands," Hudson observed, as he saw him searching. "Should you like a cup of coffee?"

Edric assented wearily, and it came in due course, with some more of the Captain's compliments, and he would be with Mr. Poynter directly.

His fatigue must have been overpowering, for no sooner had he swallowed the coffee than his eyes closed gently, his head fell forward, and Hudson, re-entering to make the place tidy for the night, found him soundly sleeping, past all his efforts to waken.

"So he won't see the Captain to-night. What a pity!" he whispered, with a queer smile. "Come in, William! Now then, Peterson, if you please." The grizzly old sea-dog, that Edric had seen on guard, stepped in, and gently lifted Edric into his berth and then withdrew, leaving him to the ministrations of Hudson, who deftly undressed him and made him comfortable for the night, with the web strapped securely over him as before.

He woke next morning refreshed and vigorous, despite a racking headache: a very different man to deal with from the Edric of yester-

day. "What have I been doing?" he demanded of himself, indignantly, "that I find myself still here. Confound this thing!" tearing at the meshes that enveloped him. "How did they get me into it again? Hudson! I say, Hudson!" he shouted, lustily. "They don't keep me here another twenty-four hours without explanation. Hudson! Captain Slaney. Fetch the Captain! Hollo! Hollo!" and he made the narrow space ring with the power of his strong young lungs.

He waited and listened. There was no sound in reply, and yet there were footsteps overhead, and the grey dawn stealing in at his port-hole. "Hudson! Hollo! Help! Help!" I'll try what fire and murder will do if that doesn't fetch him, he savagely determined, as he stopped again to listen. This time there were steps without, and the door opened to admit Hudson.

"Did you call me?" he asked, with the same air of civil readiness as before.

"Call you? Yes, I did! Just get me out of this at once, if you please. Did you think I should not make a row when I found it on again?"

"I don't think I'd do that again if I were you," Hudson said, gravely, without making any attempt to release Edric. "There are other passengers in the ship."

"So much the better."

"Who don't understand a word of English," he went on, quietly, "and if you alarm them they will certainly complain to the Captain, and—well it might be made unpleasant for you."

"Let me loose!" was all Edric could say, struggling with the rage that choked him. Hudson, regarding him calmly, went on to advise: "If you'd only give your parole to remain quiet, you might have as much liberty as you liked, I am certain. I'd take your word and go surety for you. It's a good ship, your cruise will cost you not a penny, you have sustained no injury for which a jury would give you a farthing damages—even if you knew anyone to sue, which you don't. The Captain has acted in perfect good faith in receiving you, and taking precautions for your safe keeping; and the more disturbance you make, the more you will confirm the description he has received of you. You will be released at the end of the voyage, and may satisfy your mind by doing your worst then. Now, sir, it's early for breakfast, but if there is anything I can get you ——" he ended in his old tone of respectful politeness.

"You are mistaken on one point," Edric answered him, deliberately. "I *do* happen to know who to thank for this. I suppose you are in her pay. I know who has very good reason for wishing me well away. I don't know what your share in the job may amount to, but if you'll trust me, you'll find it better worth your while to make terms with *me*. I think I may promise you an advance on whatever you expect from her."

Hudson smiled secretly behind the hand that twirled his black moustache, and shook his head.

"No, sir. I don't see my way to help you, however much you offer me. It's not to be done."

"Perhaps you will name the sum at which you rate your services," Edric persisted, still constraining himself to calmness.

"You quite misapprehend the situation, I assure you," Hudson replied, with a deprecatory wave of his hand. "I deeply sympathise with your unfortunate position, and if it rested with me alone I should be most happy to assist you out of it."

"Well, you can begin by undoing this," interrupted Edric. "I'll promise to keep my hands off you, if that's what you're afraid of. What do you mean?" as the other shook his head.

"Captain's orders," replied Hudson, throwing his old, worn-out pretext in his prisoner's face with a grin. "You don't expect me to do any such thing. You shall not be kept in bonds a moment longer than necessary, I give you my word. You had fair warning to go quietly out of the way; or, if you didn't, it would be so much the worse for you. You didn't take it ——" an expressive shrug drew his attention to the result. "I am deeply distressed that we couldn't have kept on friendly terms. I have no ill-will to you, not the slightest, and whenever we meet again am prepared to let bygones be bygones, and offer you the hand of a gentleman in friendship."

"You are an insolent scoundrel!" growled Edric between his set teeth, savagely, "and I hope, for your sake, I may never set eyes on you again. I tell you plainly I shall not let bygones be bygones, if I can help it." It was too humiliating to lie there helpless, hurling empty menaces at his captor, who only raised his eyebrows in polite deprecation, and Edric turned his head away and closed his eyes in bitter, impotent wrath. Hudson gazed on him for a few seconds longer with a half-amused, half-regretful air, and with a gentle shrug of his shoulders, departed.

How the next hours passed for Edric was only known to himself, and he could never tell—in a sort of dumb frenzy of rage, mortification and bewilderment, that might have driven a man of stronger mental calibre stark mad. Fortunately for Edric he was not one of those whom Nature has cursed with a powerful imagination. His mind always declined to occupy itself with anything not actually present to his senses, and, by so doing, spared him the torture of speculating on all the possible results of his involuntary desertion, on his friends' anxieties, and the dangers still hanging over him. His bonds and imprisonment were the present evils, and quite sufficient ones.

"I'll lie quiet till I can hear people about. Then, if no one comes, I'll make row enough to raise the dead and take the consequences!"

He was spared the experiment, for before the allotted time had expired the door was opened, and the "William" of the previous night entered gingerly, with a breakfast tray.

"Good-morning," said Edric, as naturally as he could. William dropped the tray on the middle of the table with a clatter, and jumped aside. There was a suppressed guffaw outside that Edric seemed to recognise as matching the weather-beaten old visage that had peered in on him before.

"Thanks. Now come here and undo this."

William, carefully leaving the door open to allow of a rapid retreat, stepped forward with evident apprehension and proceeded to release Edric, who, between indignation and shame at being discovered in his bonds, presented a wrathful, hollow-eyed spectacle indeed.

"What has become of Hudson?" he enquired, in as casual a tone as he could compass.

William stared foolishly, but replied not.

"The man who was here last night. What do you call him?"

"Him! That's Mr. Gardom! Went ashore with the pilot this morning, sir."

"What?" And Edric, half released, made such a furious bound, that William, undoing the last buckle at arm's-length, bounced away to the full length of the strap, to which he held on tight.

"At the Start, sir. Two hours ago."

"There, that will do. Thanks, I can manage the rest. Are you the steward? Yes? Then perhaps you will get me some writing materials."

Edric's first proceeding, when he had extricated himself from his bondage was to stow the accursed web away carefully under the mattress of his berth, with a view to its deliberate destruction later on. Then he dressed in better spirits, planning his appeal to the Captain. It was a relief to his mind to have extorted Hudson's frank admission of complicity. It was one step to knowing the number of his enemies. There was the Captain still to be dealt with. "Supposing he is some piratical blackguard, all the more likely that he is to be bought over. I dare say for a good round sum he'd be glad enough to put me ashore. The first thing to be done is to get at him."

He turned his attention to the breakfast, and fell to with an appetite that seemed to go a long way towards restoring William's confidence, when he reappeared timidly with pen and ink. Still keeping the extreme space of the cabin between them, he delayed long enough to allow Edric to discharge three questions. "What's the Captain's name—not Slaney, I imagine?"

William hesitated, but a gruff voice without was heard to utter: "Pollock, that's it."

"Thank you! What ship? Where for?" shouted Edric to the voice.

"*Barracouta*—Valparaiso." And the door was smartly clapped to, and William's voice was heard in tones of expostulation in the passage.

"So that was to be kept from me as long as possible?" he

observed to himself. "And yet I am to be treated tenderly. I wonder why? Do they want me for future use, or what? It surely would have made a simpler job of it to have dropped me into the river on Monday night than to send me half round the world just to come home on the first opportunity." He gave up the consideration of this apparent waste of power and money on the part of his adversaries and devoted himself to utterly destroying with the aid of a carving-knife every strap and fastening of his recent hempen prison, and a tough job he found it. This completed, he addressed himself to the composition of his epistle to the Captain, and a very effective appeal he made of it at last. He got one half-sovereign in readiness for William, reserving the other as an auxiliary aid.

He passed the next few minutes examining his cell, and wondering how it was expected he could be kept in it, supposing he had shown fight at first—come to with all his senses about him, or upset that cup of coffee instead of drinking it—and found the question partially answered by signs that precautions for his safe keeping had evidently been taken. The door had been strengthened till he found it impossible to shake it, and the partition between the cabins was extra stout, at least so he judged from the fact that no sounds passed to him through it. Reflecting that all this represented the free spending of money, he was the more driven to speculate on what the interests could be that were dependent on his imprisonment, and the less able to arrive at a conclusion.

William accepted the letter and the half-sovereign with a troubled air that justified Edric's misgivings. He had posted himself so as to see through the door to where in the gloom outside there loomed the tall form of William's auxiliary, gazing amiably in on him as a valuable caged bird, to be pounced on and seized should he attempt flight. Edric extended one hand for a second behind William's back, with the little gold coin displayed therein. "I want a few minutes' talk with Captain Pollock, that's all," he said loudly and distinctly, with an expressive nod towards the passage.

"Yes, sir," replied William, sheepishly, clattering cups and plates together with unnecessary energy.

Outside the door he bit the coin to test its quality, and after gaping doubtfully at the note for a minute, ended by disposing of it behind a tray in his pantry, and inventing a polite verbal reply to be delivered when he took in luncheon. Edric hadn't expected much from him; his reliance now was placed in the fact that his message had been heard by two, and that at sight of the gold the twinkling left eye of the old sailor had for some seconds been promptly obscured by a long and portentous wink.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE CAPTAIN'S CONSCIENCE.

EDRIC'S first flush of hope and good spirits faded as the day went on. He had counselled patience and the trial of every possible fair means first to himself; after that—what? There was a certain absurdity in his situation after all. He had time to look at it in every light before the next meal of the day appeared. He turned from it with disgust, sent the food away, and sat moodily tracing the long chain of his mysterious experience, link by link, back to its beginning on that memorable Whit-Monday.

"If I had—If I hadn't!" He ran over the profitless string of conjectures—then stopped and started up. There was a fresh footstep without, a knock on his door, and Captain Pollock in person entering, enquired, "Good-day, Mr. Gardom. I understand you want me. Is there anything I can do for you?'

Edric turned to his visitor with a sudden glow of relief and confidence. It was the feeling with which Captain Pollock inspired most people from the first glance. A great, strong, broad-shouldered Northumbrian, with a brown, wrinkled face, bright, far-seeing eyes and a kindly smile under his black beard. He looked Edric over with a sharp, considering air as if he had found something that was not exactly what he had expected it to be.

"I've sent you several messages, but I don't believe they ever reached you. I am very glad to see you here now. I think you will find you are under a mistake in having me here at all," Edric began, looking him full in the face. "To begin with, my name isn't Gardom."

Captain Pollock's forehead wrinkled. "Aye? Not Gardom? What then?"

"Edric Poynter—Royal Denbigh—orders for Egypt—kidnapped—brought on board unconscious." Edric ran over the old formula which he had been rehearsing to himself so often. "Have you any objection to telling me who you suppose me to be?" he concluded.

"Your berth was taken in the name of Mr. Arthur Gardom, by Messrs. Sewell and Swayne, part owners of this vessel and very good friends of mine. You are consigned to a firm in Valparaiso that I also know well, Broadley, Passmore and Co., and to them or their agents I am bound to deliver you: and there the matter ends as far as I am concerned."

"And how came you to take a dangerous lunatic on board?" asked the maniac in question.

"I didn't hear that you *were* dangerous," Captain Pollock replied, with a smile. "This voyage is to make another man of you. Should you like to go on deck at once?"

Edric looked at him with keen disappointment. "You mean to treat me kindly, but not to believe me. How am I to convince you? Look at me! Do I look like a madman? Are even madmen sent to sea for a long voyage without the commonest travelling necessaries?"

"Your brother ——" began the Captain.

"Do you mean that scoundrel Hudson? *He* my brother! Captain Pollock, use your own eyes for one moment and say whether anyone in their senses would believe such a thing."

Captain Pollock did use his eyes deliberately, and scanned Edric from head to foot. "If not, what is he, then?"

"He told you I was mad, I presume. Did he show you a single doctor's certificate? If he didn't, I demand by what right you dare turn your ship into a private lunatic asylum without any lawful warrant?" Edric's temper was getting the better of him at last. "I believe my letters and papers are in your care, I insist on your at once examining them and seeing whether they don't bear out my story."

"Come into my cabin and talk it over," said the Captain, linking his arm friendlily in Edric's. "You shall tell it all over again from the beginning."

Captain Pollock ushered his visitor in, offered a brandy and soda, and supplied him with a cigar, then composed himself to attention.

"First let us look through these," he said, producing a neat, sealed packet. "I was to put this into your hands when we parted, but as you authorise me ——" he finished the sentence by cutting it open.

Inside were purse, card-case, cheque-book and a few letters. Edric's face fell as he examined them. The card-case was empty, the cover—with his name inside—torn off the cheque-book, the letters had their envelopes removed. All else, including the contents of the purse, were absolutely intact.

The Captain smoked and watched his troubled face in silence for a short time. "Well, what do you make that prove?" he asked at last, not ill-naturedly.

"Everything!" declared Edric, dashing them down before him. "Look how the name has been destroyed throughout, and ask what that means. Look at the money here; are madmen usually trusted with sums like that and cheque-books? Read the letters. They are of little importance, but are not likely to have been addressed to a raving lunatic. Why has the card-case been emptied? It tells as much for as against me, all this."

Captain Pollock nodded at each suggestion as if he admitted its justice, but kept silent awhile.

"I don't mind telling you that I feel inclined to believe you, but it's clean against my better judgment. What has got the lad?" for Edric, excitedly fumbling in the purse, had suddenly wrenched out a tattered strip of green silk with a loud "Hurra!"

"Look here! In the card pocket of my purse! I never use it

now except for stamps, but the last time I did use it, this by blessed luck slipped inside the torn lining. There!" and he flung down in triumph a card, "Mr. Edric Poynter, The Royal Denbigh," with "South Camp, Aldershot," pencilled beneath.

The Captain looked it all over, back and front, and returned it, with an encouraging nod. "That goes a long way. Now begin and tell me all the rest over again."

There was a considerable difference in his way of listening this time, he asked a pertinent question or two and knit his black brows thoughtfully over the answers.

"Now, suppose I take all this for gospel, what's the next thing to be done?"

"Put me on board the first homeward-bound ship we meet."

"Aye? I thought as much. Now listen to my version of the story. Your—well, I won't call him brother—comes to me and introduces himself, with a letter from Messrs. Sewell and Swayne, and explains how he wants his brother carefully looked after. You aren't dangerous—only queer in the head—crossed in love, he hints. For the lady's sake as well as your own, the sooner you are out of England the better, but you obstinately refuse to join your family in Chili and must be got on board by stratagem. I didn't fancy your company, I don't deny, but having a vacant cabin, and your brother undertaking all the responsibility of getting you off quietly, why, I didn't like to refuse. So here you are! and the question is what's to be done with you? Just you leave me to turn it over in my mind for half-an-hour, and you go on deck and get some fresh air. You'll find Don Ramon and the señoritas up there; he's no end of a grandee, been over to Europe on a diplomatic mission, and is bringing his nieces home from boarding-school. If you can talk French to them, or Spanish, I'll introduce you by-and-by."

Edric needed no second telling or other inducement; he was off and on deck before the cigar had returned to the Captain's lips.

On deck all was white and dazzling with sunshine. The *Barracouta* was careering along with a fair wind, and every rag of canvas spread. The sea was one boundless expanse of sparkle with a dim outline on the port quarter, that was Ushant, though he didn't know it, and the sky was cloudless blue. There was the intoxication of hope in every breath he drew of the strong, free air, in the flashing white wings of the sea-bird that swooped down from aloft and hovered in the air in their wake, in the merry bird-like chatter of the two little ladies who, in resplendent French toilettes, were perched on camp-stools in a sheltered corner, beguiling the time with a strip of convent-worked embroidery, the feuilleton of a limp and dog's-eared French fashion-sheet, and a box of Everton-toffee between them. He took off his hat and stood bare-headed in the breeze, looking so bright and handsome that Rosita nudged Mercedes, and Mercedes, stooping to bite off the end of her silk with her little white teeth, laughed frankly,

and shot him a sideway glance of approval from her languishing brown eyes.

Little he cared for the two beauties. "Symphonies in black and yellow." They might keep their coquettish smiles for him. He should be a free man in another hour, if there were any trust in human nature. It was only to signal to some passing vessel and to send a boat off with him. Perhaps that very steamer, slowly creeping up from the horizon, might take him off. Should he go and call the Captain's attention to it? No, time enough. She and the *Barracouta* were miles apart yet, and the Captain was a man of his word; and, meanwhile, he could lean against the bulwarks and watch her approaching, and calculate the time that separated him from England. Nine hours back to Plymouth. Then a telegram to Colonel Borrodale and another to Sir John—he was within an ace of saying Miss Archdale. The first train to London. Surely never before had a half hour lasted so unaccountably long. Ah! Here was Captain Pollock at last! He came forward leisurely, exchanging a few words with Don Ramon, who stood, long, lean, brown and melancholy, gazing over the waters; made a pretty speech in rough-and-ready Spanish to the pretty little señoritas, and then at last crossed over to Edric.

"Will you come this way? I want to talk to you about your business, and let you see what I have made of it." The light of hope suddenly flickered and died down in Edric's heart, quenched—he didn't know why—by the Captain's look and tone. "I've thought over the case," he said, "and, not to keep you in doubt, I'm sorry for you, but I can't let you go;" and he brought his hand down heavily on Edric's arm.

"Can't let me go?" he echoed, gazing blankly first into the other's face and then at the steamer that was nearing them every moment, and with it his hopes of liberty growing sweeter and stronger.

"I'll tell you why. I've been considering the rights and wrongs of it all, and trying to find where my responsibility comes in, and what I'm justly answerable for. There are three parties in this case, you see. You and me, and the parties who have given you into my charge. You have been badly used, that's plain, though your story doesn't come out as clear as I could wish. You were hocussed and brought on board insensible, and yet, by your own showing, you went nowhere except to call on a banker and have tea with a churchwarden. You are sure you didn't flash those notes anywhere and go in to have a drink after with a friendly stranger from the country who had lost his way in London?"

"If I had, how much money should I have had left to bring on board, do you suppose?"

"That's true. Well, a lawyer might make something of it all, but I'm not one, and I believe your story, not because I think it's a good one, but because I like you, and that's no reason at all. Anyhow,

I'm clear of all share in that transaction, you'll allow. As to Messrs. Sewell and Swayne, whether they've been taken in or whether that letter was a forgery I can't pretend to say. That's not my concern either. Where my responsibility *does* come in, and where I see no chance of shirking it righteously, is that I've contracted to convey you to Valparaiso and deliver you safe to Broadley and Passmore. There's no getting clear of that. I've made an engagement, and I'm a man of my word. Whoever shipped you off counted on that, and, if he were the greatest scoundrel unhung, I'm bound to keep faith with him. I owe you something for not having made more enquiries before allowing you to come on board, and I'll make it good. Once I give you over to Broadley's agent I've got out of the bargain, and I'm yours to stand by you in any further trouble, and I promise you a free passage home in this or any other ship you choose. What do you say to that?"

"What do I say?" Edric's eyes were fixed on the homeward-bound vessel growing nearer and nearer. "That you have made me a very handsome offer, but once out there I may as well hang myself as avail myself of it. I see the force of your arguments, but they mean ruin, that's all. I am done for as far as my profession goes. I shall have simply skulked out of the fighting and every chance of promotion. How am I to show my face again? Why, even by this time, what do you suppose is being said about my absence?" He gave an impatient groan and turned away.

"And I've given an undertaking not to let you communicate with England, if I can help," exclaimed the kind-hearted Captain, in sore vexation. "That doesn't apply to me, though," suddenly relieved. "I'll write a line, just whatever you please, to ——"

"To my Colonel, thank you. It may do some good."

Captain Pollock expected something of a tenderer nature to be required of him, perhaps, but accepted the commission.

"Cheer up, my lad," he said, kindly, "and don't be thinking too hardly of me. Just try and realise how I stand. All that I've got weighing on my mind, day and night, for weeks to come. This ship and her crew and her cargo—thousands of pounds' worth down below there—not to speak of Don Pomposo over the way, who considers himself worth the lot. I don't like this vessel, never mind why; I don't like my first engineer—he's a fool. I don't like my first mate, as able a man as ever stepped, in a general way, but bound to go off his head in the first emergency. Now to get through a job like mine takes a clear head and a clean conscience, and both I mean to hold to. It's a question of right and wrong, do you see, and if we were to talk from now till to-morrow we can't make them change places."

Edric wearily assented; it was evidently hopeless to argue the point further. Captain Pollock had something more to say, however.

"I don't see why we shouldn't have a pleasant time together after

all. It sha'n't be my fault if it isn't; you must give me your word though," and his eyes grew stern, "that you'll make no attempt at escape. I don't see at present when or where you could, but there's no telling what chance there may be."

"What should you do if I tried?"

"Put you in irons directly." And Edric saw he meant it.

"All right. I'll give no parole. I'll risk it."

"Very good. Now we understand each other." And the Captain turned away with a secret smile.

Days slipped by, as they do at sea, in pleasant uneventfulness; for which reason, perhaps, Edric for the first time in his life started a diary. By way of preface he made a careful record of all his strange experiences, noting down every small detail that Captain Pollock, William, under whose charge he had specially been placed, or the sailors who had seen him brought on board, could supply. It was a scanty chronicle after all, only worthy of note because the writing of it led him at length to a discovery of quite a different nature from any he expected to make.

It may safely be asserted that nothing in the world was ever written yet without being intended also to be read. Even the most private of personal outpourings have a way of adjusting themselves as if for the inspection of another pair of eyes: and so Edric found. He was telling his story to someone—someone whose comments he was anticipating, whose criticism he was deprecating in every line. A bright-witted, sympathetic, wholly delightful someone, who would read with honest brown eyes with a flicker of fun in them. Mrs. Damien? Well, hardly. In fact—certainly not. It was all for Hester, every word of it; and here he put down his pen and laughed at himself, and finally got up and went on deck to think it all out under the stars. Had he fallen in love and out of it, and into it again without knowing it? He was not given to self-analysis—wouldn't have known how to have set about it if he had wished, but he had always prided himself on knowing his own mind, and now it appeared as if he didn't, and that was disconcerting. He had held Mrs. Damien, of all women living, as the loveliest, wisest, most to be adored. Had he wavered from that opinion? Not a jot. She was the most beautiful creature the sun had ever shone on. Most to be adored? Certainly; and nothing would give him more pleasure than to see a crowd of worshippers at her feet. She was worthy an Emperor: he only wished he could wed her to one. Wisest? He hadn't known Hester when he settled that point, so he could not be blamed for modifying his opinion a little, otherwise his faith was untarnished by a shadow of wavering. That was certain, and very satisfactory; he need bother no more about it. If he and Mrs. Damien never met again in this world, he would have the content of thinking his feelings, such as they were, towards her would be none the worse. But Hester! that

was altogether another question. If he didn't think he was to meet *her* again—and that as soon as steam, sail and the Powers above would let him; or if she were to forget him, or meet another fellow in his absence who dared to win her affections —— Well, he might just as well jump overboard at once without further consideration, for there was an end of everything. After which he returned to his cabin and wrote down this conclusion in the most emphatic language his pen could command, sealed it up and directed it "For Hester—some day," and retired to rest much relieved by the performance.

(Extract from Edric's Diary of the following day.)

"The weather changed again about mid-day. Wind blowing strong enough to drive the ladies below after luncheon. They and the old Don have been very gracious and friendly to me, and I joined them in the saloon, where Rosita sang us some French song she had learned at the convent school, and Mercedes gave me a lesson in Spanish. Then they proposed a round game, and I was just wondering what to make of my hand—for they will use that distracting pack with kings and queens of Spain and their Patron Saints and naval victories and bull fights instead of our court cards—and the three were simultaneously explaining the rules of the game to me in three different languages—when there came a sudden crashing report, that sent the cards flying from Mercedes' hand and the glass jingling down in the steward's pantry, and then came another shock and a greater, the shock of abrupt stoppage in full speed, of an instantaneous change from the ceaseless sound and vibration, that from long habit we have ceased to notice, to absolute quietude. It was almost sickening, the stillness for a second; there was row enough directly after: shouting and trampling and hissing of steam. The girls shrieked and flung themselves on Don Ramon, and I rushed upstairs. After all, it was only a slight explosion in the engine-room, they told me. The engineer had got badly scalded, unfortunately, and, worst of all, Captain Pollock had managed to come down the hatchway head-foremost and was picked up insensible. I ran back to reassure the others as well as my limited knowledge of French would allow, but I'm afraid I didn't make it very clear—totally forgetting the right words for 'engine,' 'explosion' and 'hatchway' in my confusion—for they shrieked the more. I went back again, after helping the Captain to his berth, and told them that at worst it would only be a few days under canvas while the damage was being repaired. But Don Ramon was unappeaseable. He commanded his children to go and make their preparations to leave the ship directly, and I saw him on deck following that unlucky first mate about and demanding to be set on shore at the earliest moment.

"I am sorry for the Captain, he is a right good fellow, and has been uncommonly pleasant to me. William, who seems knowledgeable in broken heads, declares that 'he has seen many a worse himself when

he was in the medical line as a boy' (carrying round the bottles and basket, I presume); and I have promised to stay with him, and am writing this in his cabin."

(Extract from Edric's Diary, two days later.)

"It seems so strange to read that over and to think that while I was killing time by writing it, fuming at the delay this accident would cause, or watching the Captain's pulse and applying lotion—wondering now and then what the sounds outside might mean—that on the other side of a plank my deliverance was being worked out. To this minute I don't understand how. One or two things may have happened. Either the damage proved greater than I was told at first, and there was actual danger, or the mate got into an uncalled for panic and Don Ramon drove his last remaining wits out of him. Anyhow, when William next appeared it was with an imperative request that I should lose no time in getting ready to leave the ship. A large Portuguese vessel, homeward bound, had been signalled, and would take us off as soon as the boat could be lowered. My preparations were soon enough made. I'm glad I retained sense enough to write a line for the poor Captain, reminding him that I had given no parole, and saying I believed he would be as glad of my escape as I was. Good, sympathetic old fellow! William's last words were that 'he'd be all right to-morrow, if he were left quiet and not bothered.'

"So here I am on board the *Rei Fernando* bound to Vigo. Hoping by good luck to reach Gibraltar as soon as the regiment."

CHAPTER XLII.

Intermediate.—September and October.

(Hester to Rose.)

"St. Agatha's Convalescent Home.

"My Dearest Rose,—I have such good news for you that, though I know the *Mallard* will be out of reach of a post office for the next few days, I must begin to tell it at once.

"By this time you must have had my telegram, with the news of Mr. Poynter's safety. I will enclose in this his own account of all his wonderful experiences. It was written, you will see, during his return voyage from the Cape Verde Islands to Gibraltar. He telegraphed directly on his arrival, but the message was delayed in transmission and reached my father in Scotland within a day of his letter. He, like the dearest of daddies, cast gun, grouse, and the expostulations of a wrathful entertainer to the winds, and came tearing up to town to make a nuisance of himself at the Horse Guards till he was perfectly assured that Mr. Poynter's involuntary absence from duty would do

him no harm. Not till it was satisfactorily arranged did he write to me.

"His letter reached me as I was sitting with Elsie in the pine-wood above the gardens of the Home. Here she would spend hours looking listlessly out to sea with great solemn, unsmiling eyes, not caring for book or work or company.

"'You had better take her home,' Dr. Bevis had just said to me; 'she is doing no good here.'

"I went after him and showed him my letter—the good old man is everybody's Father Confessor. 'The very thing you want to rouse her,' he declared.

"'But no one has dared to mention Mr. Poynter's name to her.'

"'So much the better; the shock will be the greater. Go back to her. If she takes it fainting call to me. If she takes it crying—so much the better. Let her cry for a week, if she can.'

"Well, she took it crying. Down on the ground she flung herself, amongst the heathy grass and the pine needles, clutching them in her hands and beating the earth, shaking from head to foot with hysteric sobs, till more than once I started to run after Dr. Bevis. In the end he was right. When she had cried herself into a fit of utter exhaustion, she looked up at me with a more natural look than I had seen on her face for weeks, and, when I helped her to get up, said, 'Have you been waiting by me all this time?' and gave me the ghost of her old thankful smile.

"I sat by her bedside that night till she fell asleep, and she made her confession to me. It seems a shame to repeat it, but I have given her my promise to do so, to you and Mr. Stannard as well. She is in the mood to-day to stand at the door of the nearest church, taper in hand, in a white sheet, calling upon the whole congregation to witness her contrition. Poor little child! As we fancied, she had been making to herself a hero of that very unromantic character, Mr. Poynter, dreaming about him and making too much of a few kind words and actions. I don't much wonder at her. He looks the character sometimes, and she did not see enough of him to find out that he is *really* very much like other people." [Marginal note in Mrs. Damien's hand: "Oh, Hester, Hester, what a handful of dust to throw in the eyes of a confiding friend!"] "Then the silly girl must needs confide in a fellow lodger, a mysterious foreigner, who dealt in love charms and conjurations and such black arts, and she told Elsie's fortune, and filled her head with nonsense, and at last actually induced her to try the effect of a love-philtre. Mr. Poynter came one evening. Mrs. Beltran was on the watch, secretly prompting, and the opportunity offered itself. Three drops in the bottom of a tea-cup, and the trick was done. He didn't seem any the worse, and left directly. I suppose the action of the drug was slow; for, you see, he says he remembers wandering for hours through street after street in bewilderment, not able to recall what

his errand was. Mrs. Beltran took her departure, promising that by the next moon 'the charm would have worked,' leaving poor Elsie half mad with fear and uncertainty. Then, on the very day that she had counted on, came—too abruptly, through my fault, I fear—the news of his disappearance.

"Here she came creeping in, with a letter to Mr. Poynter. 'Would I please read it and forward it to him'! A full and humble confession, which I have forthwith disposed of with the aid of a match. It has been no doubt a great relief to her to write it; but it will be a greater some day to know that he has never read it.

"Still he must know somewhat of the story. What is to be done, Rose? He is bent on finding out and bringing to punishment this woman—for I believe Mrs. Beltran to be no other than a certain Madame Euphrosyne, with whom he has had some queer dealings, and who has her own reasons for wanting him out of the way—but how can it be done without involving Elsie? Think of her story being told in a police court! And yet how can I ask him to forbear, and let the woman escape? He has written to his solicitor, he says. What *can* be done, Rose? If he only would wait till he comes home, or till I can explain the case to him, I'd be grateful to him for ever after."

[Marginal note: "Tell him so!"]

(Rose Damien to Eustace Stannard; with the foregoing enclosed.)

"If Hester is right in her guess, it explains why you or I have never chanced to see this Mrs. Beltran on our visits to Lavender Row. I knew the woman at Cannes. A terrible tragedy occurred in an American family we knew there, and she was suspected of being an accomplice. She chose to stay and brazen it out, going everywhere in public, and rather enjoying the uncanny reputation she had acquired. She must have known who I was, and might object to my recognising her in London under a different name.

"Only a fortnight longer, and then —— What will my reception be, I wonder, when next I show my face in St. Fridolin's?"

(Eustace Stannard to Oliver Meynell.)

"I have had the woman we are seeking here under my hand at St. Fridolin's, and let her slip! I do not see what we can do but await Mr. Poynter's return from Egypt now. Let us hope Sir Garnet's calculations may prove correct. Any news of Magrath lately?"

(Oliver Meynell to Eustace Stannard.)

"Rivington, *Nov. 4th.*

"I have received a most extraordinary letter from Magrath. He regrets he agreed to compromise, and seems disposed to insist on the actual possession of the Irish property. He wishes me to appoint a

day for an interview. May I count on your help? I suppose he will expect you to be present.

"Will you tell me what you think it means?"

(E. Stannard to O. Meynell.)

"It means extortion. Will Saturday, the 18th, suit you? I am going away to-morrow for a few days. I see the Royal Denbigh are coming home."

CHAPTER XLIII.

"SEE THE CONQUERING HEROES COME!"

THE morning of the eighteenth November dawned with a chill yellow fog, through which Mr. Paramount groped his way to his office, welcoming it, miserable and cheerless as it was, as a promise of screen and protection on the errand he had in view. Nobody would see him, and he didn't want to be seen. Not that he was ashamed of what he was going to do. Anybody might have business in Piccadilly or at Charing Cross. It was only that his presence there might be misconstrued by anybody who might meet him there about eleven o'clock. Anybody like our Mr. Ebden for instance; a flippant youth, who smoked and read sporting papers all office hours, and whom he was disgusted to find in old Mr. Lovibond's office when he went in to ask permission to depart for the rest of the day. The grave senior partner had given it without asking questions, like a gentleman, but young Ebden must needs wink and grin, and enquire whether Trafalgar Square wasn't the nearest way to everywhere that morning, and whether he had secured a reserved seat on one of the lions?

"Hullo! Don't go!" as Mr. Paramount was about to withdraw without pursuing the subject. "We've got to congratulate you on the last lustre shed on the name of Paramount. Not seen the *Penny Pictorial.* No? I bought it on purpose for you. Look here! Here's fame. Something like a British warrior, eh?" and he unfolded and displayed an exciting woodcut, one of a series, "Heroes of the Rank and File." This one in particular represented "Private Sampson Paramount at Tel-el-Kebir," as he appeared in a cloud of dust and smoke, his foot on a pile of turbaned corpses, warding off a flight of cannon-balls with his naked sword, and with his other arm supporting a very limp general officer. In the left foreground, a bursting shell, a cataract of shattered limbs and masonry, and the special artist of the *Pictorial* sketching him. Even old Mr. Lovibond, who seldom encouraged his nephew's sportiveness in office hours, rubbed his glasses and requested to be allowed to see, returning it with the dry remark "that the young man had apparently found a vocation more to his taste than office work." By this time the poor old father, utterly miserable, could only murmur indistinct protests and depart, carefully pocketing the journal, however.

"Elsie will like to see it. I can post it to her without any comment," he reflected. "Dear, dear, to think of her so happy at that lovely place, with roses and myrtles under her windows, and pleasant company, and yet she wishing for nothing so much as to come home and make her old father comfortable. Perhaps there is no place like London, after all. I've thought of a great many things I can do to make her life easier. What'll she say to her pretty new room, I wonder! I've had *one* good child at least, only one, to stay with me. Well, there! I've forgiven Sampson, and I won't let him see that I'm there to look on him in his disgrace to-day. I ought to keep away, but I must see for myself that the boy is safe and alive. 'Lance thrust through the fore-arm, and collar-bone broken,' that's what the papers said. If he'd only stayed safely at the office! He'll think of that now."

He had many similar reflections with which to beguile the long, slow omnibus journey, that ended in a region of fog—a few shades paler than at the farther end. He peered about at a street corner for a minute, intending to make his way to Whitehall, Mr. Ebden's remarks having set him against Trafalgar Square; but he got bewildered and hesitated, made a few uncertain steps, and, somehow, got caught up and absorbed in a stream of sight-seers making steadily for Charing Cross. He was too confused to resist, and so, unknown to himself and against his will, by a moment's irresolution changed the course of his life for the rest of his days, gave a romance to St. Fridolin's, and ended this story.

The streets were thickly lined by an orderly, expectant crowd; orderly, because hopeless of finding a place once lost in the ever more thickening fog. Why they should wait at all was a matter of wonderment. It was cold, it was damp underfoot, only one in every dozen had a chance of beholding more than a misty outline of the passing troops they had come to welcome, and yet they waited, cheered by occasional rifts and flashes of sunshine through the cloud curtain. Mr. Paramount, drifting along, found himself in Cockspur Street, where a voice from King George's statue invited him to "Come up 'ere, guv'nor!"

He was very doleful by this time. He had no fear of being seen, but, alas, no chance either of seeing. His spectacles got blurred directly; and with the utmost striving he could not flatter himself he should obtain a place in the inner line. "They are coming!" There was a stir and a thrill; and suddenly, and with electric effect, the fog lifted, and out flashed in full glory the brief sunshine. He ran along behind the close-serried line of backs and shoulders, making desperate efforts to find a gap. In vain. He could hear the measured tramp of feet, and the approaching roar of voices. "Here they come! Hurrah!" and the crowd jammed more closely. "Oh, what is it? *Who* are they?" he demanded, piteously. "Indians!" said someone. "There's a swell. Look at him!" He made another struggle forward. The

turban of a mounted ressaldar and a glimpse of his green tunic were visible for one instant, and then the peephole closed. Tramp, tramp, they all passed by. Glimpses of helmets, breastplates, horses' ears—these were cavalry, then—and Sampson would be on foot. Another chance, and he desperately wedged himself in. Infantry now, he could see. "Is this the Royal Denbigh? Do oblige me by telling me," he appealed to his neighbours. "No; Marines. Bravo, Jollies! Hooray," and the helmets passed. "They're coming now, though. Look out!" "Oh, *do* let me in to see, only for a moment!" he cried, regardless of appearances. A well-dressed man in front turned round. "Have *you* anyone there?" he asked, good-naturedly, trying to turn edgeways and make a place for him. "My son's there! He's been wounded, and I sha'n't see him!" cried the old man, recklessly. "Let him in," the gentleman begged of those surrounding, himself setting the example. "Let him see his son pass." "This way, come along!" and two or three strong arms promptly seized and hauled him forward, till he found himself the centre of an amiable group round the base of a lamp-post, one or two having obligingly swarmed up higher to make room for him. "Now, then! Which is he? This one?" as Sir Evelyn Wood at the head of the Infantry Brigade rode into view. "Not there. Nor there," as the Seaforth Highlanders in white helmets and tartan trews marched by. "He's in the Royal Denbigh;" and eager to prove that it was under no false pretence he came there, he managed to extricate the *Pictorial* from his pocket and display it with a result uncontemplated by him. "Paramount, is it? Then look out! Here they are! Go it, Denbigh! Hooray! Hooray! Which of them is it?" "There, there!" pointing excitedly to a sunburnt face and an arm in a sling. "Then go it, Paramount! Well done, Sampson! Three cheers for Paramount of Kassassin! All right, Tel-el-Kebir! There. Let him see you," and willy-nilly up the post, despite protestations and appeals, he was shoved, just as Sampson, catching his name, raised a pair of wondering eyes to behold his father up aloft, waving the *Penny Pictorial* frantically and shouting with the best.

"Bravo, Denbighs! Hooray! Hooray!"

Then he dropped to his feet in confusion. "Thank you, thank you, my dear boys. I must get home now. Will you help me? And take this"—emptying his pockets of all their loose silver — "to drink Corporal Paramount's health." Helped by one and another he found himself on the outskirts of the throng, all a tremble, his hat crushed, his clothes twisted and rumpled, and his old eyes full of tears, tremulously murmuring: "God bless the lad! If poor Emmie could have lived to see this! Now I must go home and say nothing more about it." But Fate was too many for him.

A very different party of spectators had been watching the show from a window in a hotel overlooking Trafalgar Square. A group of pretty women, some very fine gentlemen indeed, and a general officer

in full splendour. The procession passed away, luncheon disposed of, two of the party stood in the recess of a window looking out on the street below.

"I wonder how soon Randolf will be able to get away and come to us?" the gentleman said. "How ill he looked as he passed."

"Unhappy and careworn, as well as ill. Very like you when you first came to St. Fridolin's," replied the lady. "If he doesn't arrive before you leave, I hope he'll stay away altogether. I can't introduce myself as his future sister-in-law—he won't believe me. Telling Lady Monchalsea would be nothing in comparison."

"What did she say?"

"Everything that was disagreeable, of course; but it served to amuse her for the whole cruise."

"I have to be at Meynell's office by half-past three ——" Eustace was beginning, when Mrs. Damien seized his arm.

"Look, look! It is—it really is Mr. Paramount."

"Yes! He has been, after all, to see his son. Oh, if we could only catch him and make him acknowledge it!"

"I'll bring him!" And off darted the Vicar after his Churchwarden; while Mrs. Damien, hurriedly calling Hester to her aid, arranged the details of his reception.

Mr. Paramount was soon overtaken, but to induce him to return was another thing.

"Mrs. Damien wants me particularly?" he exclaimed, unhappily. "I—I really ——" looking first at his rumpled coat and then piteously at Eustace. "Please make my excuses."

But Eustace was inexorable, and Mr. Paramount, still mazed and enfeebled by the shock of his late experiences, found himself, without knowing it, hurried back to the hotel, brushed and smartened up to his usual pitch of trim perfection, and, in the centre of a gay company, bowing to a splendid gold-laced, scarlet-clad, medal-and-order-bedecked warrior, who at a signal from his daughter made him a brief, gracious little speech. He complimented him on his son, that promising young soldier; implied that he ought to be grateful to Providence for having returned the paragon to him in good condition, made a graceful allusion to the recruiting of our army from the upper classes, and dismissed him to luncheon with military brevity.

Hester conducted him to the table and made room for him beside Lady Beatrix Lepell, who greeted him with her wonted joviality and recommended the mayonnaise. She and Mrs. Damien were again the best of friends. "For Heaven's sake, Trixy, if you must quarrel with somebody, don't let it be the one woman of all your acquaintance whose nose and chin are not out of drawing," her Augustus had besought her. They plied the old gentleman with dainty fare and pretty little veiled compliments till his head felt giddy. He was not unduly exalted; on the contrary, he rose from the table very meek and subdued. It all brought home to him so forcibly the inscrutable-

ness of the ways of this world and of the young folks whose world it is. He bade a polite adieu to all.

"You will get home more easily now," Mrs. Damien said; "see how the streets have emptied," and she stepped out on the balcony. The fog still hung about, but not thickly, and the passers-by in the streets were distinctly visible. A carriage drove up to the hotel entrance and stopped almost directly beneath them. Mr. Paramount retired hastily into the room again.

"I couldn't be mistaken!" he exclaimed, with suppressed excitement. "It's Elsie's friend I told you about, ma'am; Mrs. Beltran. Oh, dear, dear, I'm sorry to see them about again. They are staying here, I presume. To look at her now and to think they once lodged in Lavender Row! With your leave I'll stay here a few minutes longer, till they have gone. I confess I feel some reluctance to meeting Mrs. Beltran."

"Mrs. *who?*" shouted the Vicar, springing to his feet. "Beltran? Did you say *Beltran?*"

"I certainly did. No harm, I hope?"

"It's too good to be true. And coming in here?"

"I saw her enter. The gentleman drove away in the carriage."

"Come along! I'd give a hundred pounds to be sure you're right! Come. You must keep watch that she does not get away, while I send a telegram to Seagrave Place."

"No; stop!" and Hester, catching a word or two, sprang to intercept him. "Stop; tell me first. What do you want with her? Who are you talking about? Not Elsie's friend?"

"Miss Archdale, I cannot wait to explain. We must secure her at all hazards."

"Then go at once, if that's what you mean to do. *I* want her, too, and so does somebody else!"

Before the door had slammed on the two she was across the room and had seized astonished Sir John by the arm. "Daddy, where's Captain Poynter to be found? We must have him here directly!"

"Why, Het, how *should* I know? He's gone home by this time; or, if he hasn't, I don't know how it's to be done. Where do you expect to find him?"

"In St. James's Park, of course. They can't have done more than have got back there yet. Off at once, Daddy, if you ever hurried in your life, and bring him. See the Colonel!—Sir Evelyn Wood!—the Duke! Say it's for life and death! Say that *I* want him!"

(To be concluded.)

EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF A YOUNG LADY.

PART II.

SEPTEMBER 2nd.—A year has passed since the last extract given. Papa and I are to dine at Lady Freeman's to-night. It still seems strange that Amy is married, and that he and I live tête-à-tête together, and together go to the few parties that ever occur in this neighbourhood. Strange, but pleasant. This dinner party has an unusual interest in it, as it is given in honour of poor Sir John Grant's nephew, the present baronet, who has only quite lately come home. Papa hopes he will prove a worthy successor to the good old man, and is anxious to meet him.

Sept. 3rd.—Oh, what a wonderful evening was yesterday!

We were all standing round the fire, at Lady Freeman's, talking, when Sir Marcus Gray was announced; and I think we all looked with some interest towards the door to see what the new baronet, who had come in the place of our old friend, was like.

As he entered, my heart gave a great bound, and then stood still. It was not he at all; it was not Sir Marcus. It was my friend, the man who had told me not to forget him. A strange sensation crept over me, reminding me of that terrible night—I hated anything that reminded me of it—when for the first time in my life I fainted; but I was only faint now. I soon found I was recovering my senses, before I had lost them; and, while they were still in confusion, I found that Lady Freeman was shaking hands with the new comer and introducing him to papa and other people of any importance there as Sir Marcus Gray. And then I gradually took in the fact that Sir Marcus Gray was the man I had danced with at Westbeed, and in whose society I had spent that blissful summer day.

I saw in a moment he was anxiously looking round the little group that stood by the fireside. Our eyes met. The blood rushed over his face. He was at my side in an instant, an eager hand stretched out to me, an unmistakable expression of joy in his face. His blue eyes shone with a strange fire in them.

For the rest of that evening I felt as if I were in a dream. I looked, moved, and spoke in a dream; I never woke once. Of course Sir Marcus took Lady Freeman into dinner. Of course I fell to the share of some unimportant bachelor, and sat at a different part of the table. I eat and drank, and talked little commonplaces of the most commonplace description, but it was all in a dream. I was just waiting. I knew what would happen when he was free; I knew he would come to me; and so he did. Of course; it would not have been him if he had not. I sat a little apart when the gentlemen entered the drawing-room after dinner; and some instinct told him where I was, for he walked

straight from the door to my chair. He had not given himself time to look for me or see me. He came at once. And then we talked, and another day was added to my life, which now consisted of three. He told me of his disappointment when he called at our house at Westbeed to introduce himself to my father, and he found that we had left. He was only in England for a few days then. He was in the army, and intended to sell out, but his regiment being ordered on service he could not leave with honour, and it was only now he was able to do so. He intended now to settle at home. He looked happier, I thought, than when I had first met him; the expression of extreme sweetness was still in his face, but the melancholy tinge yet mingling with it was less, I thought, than it had been.

It was a perfect evening.

Oct. 1st.—I am engaged to be married to Sir Marcus Gray. My father is delighted and everybody thinks it charming. How can they help doing so? Was there ever such a marriage before? Ever such a man as he? ever such a lucky girl as I?

Papa laughs, and says I view all through rose-coloured glasses. He quietly informs me that I am in love. He declares it is an excellent match for his little Lucy, but that Sir Marcus is quite as fortunate as I am. He is, he admits, good and religious, which, he informs me further, ninety-nine young men out of a hundred are *not*.

We are to be married very soon; as soon as I can get my trousseau ready. And the reason why the engagement is only to be a few weeks' is this: Papa for some time now has not been very well. There is nothing seriously wrong—my dear, dear father! Ah! what should I do if there were?—but he has had advice, and the doctor tells him that though there is nothing serious, there is that amiss which might become serious if it were not taken in time. So he is to go away and have complete change of climate for a whole year. A long sea voyage is said to be the best thing for him, so he is going to Uncle George in Australia, and Fred's regiment is ordered out there just now. I think that is what made papa fix on Australia, for he and Fred and Amy will sail together immediately after my marriage.

Oct. 20th.—I write very seldom in my journal now. I am too busy. I have to be trying on dresses and choosing pretty things half the day. A baronet's bride, I find, requires a much handsomer trousseau than a captain's; and papa is so kind and generous. Then Marcus takes up a great deal of my time, and I grudge every minute almost, now, I am away from papa. I neither read nor write. I think I am the idlest girl in England, and yet I never have one moment to myself.

Nov. 7th.—I have been married a week to-day! It *does* seem wonderful. And soon I dare say I shall feel as if I had always been married, and as if the wonderful thing is that once I was Lucy Lee, not Lucy Gray. Marcus is all I ever believed him and a great deal more. What a happy girl I am. My life is a poem from morning till night and from night till morning, and the deep happiness is that Marcus is

so good. I think there must have been some great grief in his life which has made him more thoughtful and serious than young men generally are, and left a tinge of melancholy in his character.

Jan. 1st.—With the new year I will begin my journal again. I *have* neglected it, but how can I be blamed for that? First, there was the honeymoon, spent in that most delightful of all ways of spending time, travelling; and during our delicious têtes-à-tête how could I find time to write? And then the settling at home, the gradual subsiding into home life, the receiving and returning visits and going to all the parties given in our honour; and then every moment that we could spend tête-à-tête I grudged bestowing on any other occupation. But visits are not so frequent now; they all have been paid and returned, and Marcus, of course, has sometimes business in which I cannot join, and that obliges him to leave me for awhile; therefore I am going to begin my journal.

Jan. 17.—What a wonderful man he is. I did not know a young man *could* be like him. He thinks so much of duty and doing good, and so very much of not being drawn into temptations, of not giving oneself the chance of sinning; and all this not for himself so much as for others. It is a beautiful character, this husband of mine possesses, and the more I study it, the more I see to admire and respect as well as to love in it. Lucky girl that I am! And how good I ought to become in such companionship.

Jan. 20th.—We were walking in the shrubberies to-day. The place is so full of evergreens that on a mild winter's day one might fancy oneself in a rich green autumn. The sun shone, the sky was a pale blue just flecked with little clouds, and I was happy. I paused at an old sundial to examine it, and turning to speak to my husband I found his eyes fixed on me with an expression I could hardly read. Then again that old impression came over me that I had seen his eyes before I had seen him. Sad folly! I think it must be that when true lovers meet they *recognise* each other's souls, as what they have been waiting for; and his soul looks at me through those blue eyes of his, and so I seem to have seen the eyes themselves before. That winter's sky I stood under to-day is not so blue as Marcus's eyes. I do wonder whether I have seen any other eyes like them. It seems hardly possible. No one is like my husband.

"Why do you look at me so, Marcus?" I asked gently.

"I was thinking of the song 'Strangers Yet,'" he replied.

"That wicked, false song!" I cried; "you know there is not a word of truth in it."

"Now I scarcely think I agree with you, there."

"What, are *we* strangers yet?" I exclaimed indignantly.

"Are we not?" he answered smiling. "Do you know me?"

"Yes, a thousand times yes!" I cried; "I know you entirely; better than I know myself."

"You do?" He smiled again, but it was a sad smile. "No, Lucy,

you do *not*. There is a secret in my life which I have never told you."

"Yes, I know that," I replied slowly.

He looked quickly at me. "You know it?" he said in a sort of breathless whisper.

"I mean that I *thought* there was. I have fancied you had some past grief in your life."

He breathed freely again.

"I was a wild young fellow, my love," he said, "and there is *much* in my life I would gladly blot out of it."

"*You?*" I cried with incredulous tones.

"Yes I—even I," he replied very sadly. "Would you love me less, dear, if you knew I had sinned?"

His eyes were fixed on me, those blue eyes of his, with an expression of desperate entreaty in them. How pathetic they looked! I felt ready to cry, and in some strange way I seemed to recognise their expression. A thrill ran over me, and I felt like one remembering. I had seen that very expression in those very eyes before! And yet I had not, because it was impossible.

Then I recollected that he had asked me a question, and I had to reflect before I could answer it.

"We are all sinners," I said, with a thought of papa's teaching in my mind; "but don't talk so, dear Marcus. I don't like it. Your beautiful conscience has made you think more of little faults, and I believe all quite young men are silly; but don't get into a habit of calling yourself a sinner, please. It is so unpleasant. Just once for all in church every Sunday does nicely for the week, and we ought to be content with that."

He could not help laughing; but even while he laughed there was a sorrowful, yearning look in his eyes as they gazed down into mine. Then he recovered himself and said very tenderly: "What is past is past, and my work now is to make you happy, my own sweet little wife."

March 2nd.—My husband has to leave me for a few days. A first separation! How earnestly we hope it may be a last! But important family business calls him to Paris. A brother he loves is in a difficulty out of which he can get him by his personal intervention. I am not very strong just now and the doctor forbids the rapid journey he must take, so farewell must be said. Oh, my darling, how shall I be able to live even a few days without you? How sad and lonely it will be. Alas! for the poor women who have to spend the rest of their lives separated from their husbands. How do widows live at all? I cannot imagine it, and the mere thought of them makes me cry. But then, there are few husbands like mine. If he were not so good and noble, if he were not perfect, I should not feel about him as I do. We have been married nearly six months and I have not detected a single fault in him. When we married, I took it as a matter of

course that he must have faults, though I had not yet found them out. I may, if I choose, take it as a matter of course still, but I have not yet discovered them.

April 25th.—I will try and write down calmly the dreadful events of the past weeks. I feel that it may be a sort of relief to do so, if the word relief can ever be used by me again.

He was gone, and I wandered about the house so sad and yet so infinitely happy. Oh, did such happiness really exist as mine then? I must not write of it or think of it, or I shall die.

He had given me his keys in case I wanted anything, but as he did so he reserved one key from the bunch. I found afterwards he had made a mistake and kept back the wrong key, leaving me the one of the drawer I ought never to have opened. Two days after he was gone came a telegram to me; he had left some things behind that he wanted; and so I went to his dressing-room to find them for him. Among other drawers I unlocked one in his table, a drawer he always kept locked. I did not see in it what I was looking for, but my eye fell on something else. A book—a Bible. I knew I had seen it before. The dark blue morocco binding, with the gold edge a little shabby, struck me with a strange familiarity. Idly I opened it, and read in round childish hand my own name.

"Lucy Lee, from her dear papa on her tenth birthday." What did it mean? How did that book get here? Stay, what is this written underneath it, and written, how wonderful! in my husband's hand: "Given by her to me, Marcus Gray, on the night of the 2nd of June, 18—. From this night I go and sin no more."

And there is more still, in different, fresher ink, but the same writing, just below the first sentence:

"Nov. 1st, 18—. Married to-day to the beautiful child who gave me this book on that memorable 2nd of June, three years ago. She saved me then and I have lived worthy of her since. To do so and to win her love, has been the one object of my life. God grant that I never give her cause to repent it."

What did it mean?

For minutes, perhaps for hours—I do not know—I stood as one stunned, the book in my hand, my eyes staring at the words, though unable to read them again. Then, through my brain like lightning, the meaning flashed; flashed never to be forgotten while memory remained; flashed with a physical agony such as lightning might perhaps inflict. He—my husband—was that sailor lad whom I had hidden in my room and to whom I had given that Bible. He—my husband—was a murderer; the murderer of Sir John Gray; of his own uncle. Everything confirmed this horrible impossibility; dreadful thoughts rushed and tumbled one over another into my mind, all making the impossibilities possible. I knew he had not been on good terms with his uncle, and that something had happened that made it painful to him to hear his name. In fact we never

spoke of him as I had discovered this before we married. Then the secret in his life, and his thought of himself always as a great sinner, and then—what with the damning evidence of the Book, which was enough in itself, I *recollected* him—yes—God help me—I did! Those blue eyes that had haunted me, that expression of passionate entreaty, I knew now where I had seen them—why I recognised them. Nay, I remembered the very features now, those clearly-cut, handsome features. The slight youth had grown into the strong, broad-shouldered man, and the fair complexion and hair had been stained dark along with the sailor's disguise—that was all.

These terrible *proofs* convinced me, and as they did so I lost consciousness and fell heavily to the ground. I was aware of a sensation of thankfulness; it was the last thought I was aware of; thankfulness that I died, that the shock had killed me, and all was over.

I will think calmly; but it is the calmness of despair. Would to God I had indeed died then.

When I came to myself I was in bed and undressed. I looked for Marcus, but he was not there. A strange woman stood on one side of my bed and Doctor Winsley on the other. They seemed busy about me, and I felt surprised.

"What is the matter?" I asked. How faint and weak my voice sounded. "Where is my husband?"

Then they told me I had been ill, but that I was recovering; that I had been in bed some days, and Sir Marcus was in France; that they had not sent for him as they did not know his address. There had, they added, been no occasion to send for him, as there had not been anything dangerous in my illness, though from weakness I had been unconscious. All this was told me gradually, and so as in no way to alarm or excite me. Afterwards I learned that I had been found in a fainting fit on the floor, and that my illness had destroyed the sweet hopes of motherhood which had latterly been mine. I lay all that day quiet and passive in bed, and all that night and all the next day. I took nourishment and medicine, and strength returned by degrees, and Doctor Winsley said that I should soon be convalescent.

But in the middle of the second night my dreadful doom fell upon me. I suddenly, in one second of time, remembered what had happened. Sir Marcus Gray was a murderer and I was his wife!

At first I could only abandon myself to the horror of the one fact, my husband was a murderer. I seemed staring it in the face and making myself acquainted with it. Then I passed through more than the anguish of death, more than the agony even of seeing him die. But out of this came the necessity of arranging my future life. I was young and ignorant, I never thought of means and ways, and how could I carry out such a project? All I intended to do was to hide; hide so that no one should ever find me, or ever learn that I

was that miserable woman, Lucy Gray, Marcus Gray's wife. I must go before my husband returned. One thing I would do. I would take my little Bible with me, and by so doing my husband would know why I had left him, and would make no search for me.

My recovery proceeded but slowly while such dreadful thoughts rent my heart in twain. I schooled myself with a desperate force, that I might gain strength enough in time, and I felt myself becoming cold and hard and old under this forced calm.

I did not read one of my husband's letters, and I did not write to him. I could not do either. But one day a telegram came to say he was anxious at my silence, that his business might keep him a week longer, but he must have a telegram to say all was well, or he should return at once.

I asked Doctor Winsley to wire that all was well, and then to write giving a favourable report of my illness, and saying that I should soon be all right again, but that I could not write at present. "And that must be followed by daily bulletins; he will be so anxious," I said, quietly.

Suddenly, in the middle of the night, I woke from a dream of being married to Marcus. We stood before the altar dressed in black, in a vast, gloomy cathedral, the light dim as the struggling dawn of a winter's day. It was cold; tears started from my eyes; my bridegroom stood beside me a pale, melancholy ghost. I woke suddenly, with these words sounding in my ears, as if spoken aloud:

"Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

I lay absorbed in the sound.

Then words came from my heart as if in answer to the voice that spoke so loudly: "For better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death us do part. Amen."

Floods of tears fell from my eyes, that had not wept a single tear since the fatal hour when I found the Bible. I wept as if I had never wept before.

I knew my doom, and my spirit rose to it in humble prayer. I was his wife. I must stay with him. I must help. I must console. I must endure. I must live for this duty, if I could. I must not die till God saw fit to take me. I must *endure*.

As my body grew strong my mind strengthened also, and by the time Sir Marcus returned home I had schooled myself into a wonderful calm. I found myself clasped in his arms, held passionately against his breast, my face covered by his kisses. I did not shrink or falter. Ah, my love, my poor guilty love, your touch, your kiss did not repel me. How often had I pictured to myself this moment, but had I ever seen it like the reality? Had I ever thought of myself as yielding to that embrace and returning that kiss? With a sorrowful pride, my heart acknowledged that it still loved, and vowed itself yet anew to its duty.

When in the drawing-room, his blue eyes (alas, alas!) scanned me with deepest love, changing to anxiety.

"Dearest," he cried, "how ill you have been—far, far more than I dreamed of. Why, this is not my Lucy."

"It is your *wife*," I said softly, with an emphasis that I only understood on the little word; then I added: "Yes, I have been very ill—and it has been a strange illness—it seems to have changed me, as you say. I am *not* what I was."

"Lucy," he cried, again embracing me, "as you recover your strength, your gaiety will return—your hopes have been disappointed—your tender heart wounded, and I not able to console—not near you."

Then he went to dress for dinner, and after that we dined together, and together we even left the dining-room for the little boudoir in which we spent our evenings. How sweet, how dear, how home-like it all was. Yet was it not only a burlesque, such as demon fingers might draw, of the life that *had been?* If it were a sin to harbour the criminal, verily my sin had found me out. Just then my husband, who I supposed had been telling me something amusing, gave a cheery laugh. The laugh startled me. I looked at him, and for an instant the scene around me faded away as I beheld, as if with my physical eyes, that man laughing there, my husband, murdering another. I rose from my chair with a cry of pain.

"My dearest," he said, taking me in his arms, "you are still ill. What has Doctor Winsley been about? Why was I not sent for? You should be in your bed—you should, indeed."

He caught me in his kind arms and carried me, more than supported me, up stairs to my room. What could I do in that loving embrace but nestle my head on his breast, and there, my face hid, weep out my anguish? I felt in that moment as if I could have told him all, and that, with no secret between, we could bravely, though sorrowfully, live hand-in-hand our life of penitence and duty, and that, so lived, it might not be so intolerable. There would even have been a sweetness in telling him that I still loved him, loved him still, through all, notwithstanding all. But I could not do it. I felt that to him such a life might be the one thing that could not be borne.

So no word was spoken and I was left alone. Alone to weep and to pray; and my very soul seemed to lose itself in tears and in prayers before I sought my bed. I feigned sleep when my husband came, and I lay sleepless the whole night, though I wondered greatly at the calm slumber which he enjoyed.

Habit is above all things. There is something humiliating in the discovery of how soon the mind becomes accustomed to anything. Ecstatic joy or mortal anguish are accepted after the first, and cease to annoy. How many of us have said, "That I could not bear;" and have been plunged into that very unbearable grief, and learned to

smile under it? Yes, and to cease to feel the burthen that *could not* be borne.

And so the days pass on. My husband thinks I have never recovered from my illness, and treats me with a tenderness and consideration that nearly breaks my heart. And he is right. I have never recovered, and the continued mental anguish, the agony that lies for ever in my heart, hidden by my quiet, calm face, is sapping the very springs of life. I am fading away; I am dying. Oh, the relief that this knowledge brings me! I am so young that I have strength to resist, but the enemy is too strong for me—that blessed enemy will conquer—I shall die.

June 1st.—It is months since I have written a line in this book. I cannot leave such a story of a life incomplete. I will finish it, for it is finished, and then I will shut up my book and write in it no more.

I grew very brave and carried on my life as it was, being everything to my husband that a wife could be, devoting myself to him entirely, and—was it strange?—loving him only the more I did so. It was, perhaps, the saddest part of my doom that I loved him still. And how beautiful his life, how noble his character would have been but for *that*—oh, bitter knowledge. An involuntary Eve, I had eaten the apple and knew evil from good.

Sir Marcus became very unhappy about me, as I, by slow degrees, day by day, faded away before his eyes. I knew I was dying and I think he saw it too. How he tended me with an atmosphere of love and gentleness that by turns pierced and soothed my poor broken heart. I do not know that we ever loved each other better than in those melancholy days when each carried a sad secret which love taught us to conceal from the other. My husband never for a moment let me believe he thought seriously of my health, but sometimes I found his eyes fixed on me with an expression that would have alarmed me, had not such alarm been only a joy. One day he asked me if I would like to go to Australia. I reflected for half a moment, and then refused with decision.

"Is my darling pining for her father and sister?" he whispered softly, encircling me with his arms. Do not be afraid to tell me, sweetheart; I should only love you for your love of them. But let me take you to them—if you were happy, you would get well quickly."

I was eager to speak. "Marcus," I said, "it is not that. I love them, but I am your wife. Never forget that my life is yours; that I live in you and for you. Never forget it."

"Then what is it, dearest? Tell me what I can do."

But I sighed heavily, and, leaning back in my chair, closed my eyes. My heart bled for him, and then for myself. How I pitied us both. Two miserable young creatures, scarcely more than boy and girl. I viewed them as if I was not one of them, and my heart ached with

pity for them. Why had just these two been singled out for such a life as this? Why had the boy been so tempted? Why had the girl married him? But here my heart smote me. Did I indeed wish not to have become his wife. No, I did not. I wished very earnestly to die, but I never wished I had not married Marcus. When I laid down my happiness, I took up the duties of a wife, and with the duties I found I had taken up the love also. Still there was one thing, only one I never did. I never voluntarily caressed. I never kissed him or laid my head on his kind shoulders, or threw my arms round him as of old. Something kept me from this. I know not what—for I never shrank from him. I loved his kind tone and tender kisses. I do not know whether he noticed this. If he did perhaps he thought me passive from the languor of ill-health.

One day he was turning over the contents of a drawer, long unopened, in the library. He was searching for photographs of himself as a boy, which I had expressed a wish to see; and to gratify a wish of mine no trouble was too great. He had looked everywhere likely, and, going to this drawer as a forlorn hope, he found them there

"Here they are," he cried; but the next moment he uttered an exclamation which struck my ear as one of horror. I sprang from my chair and ran to look over his shoulder. He held a photograph in his hand, but it was no boy's face he regarded so intently, the portrait was not his at all. It was a photograph of his murdered uncle, Sir John Gray, and across the picture was a great red stain of blood.

I do not know why this sight overwhelmed me; my nerves ought to have been hardened by the life I had led; every hour of every day had brought to them trials surely worse than this. Yet this alone was more than I could bear; I screamed aloud and then fainted. I should have fallen, but he caught me in his arms. I did not lose consciousness entirely, but I could not stand or see. He laid me on the sofa and tenderly brought me back to life with restoratives and gentle fanning; the cool breeze seemed to reach my brain and soothe it.

"Oh, that blood, that dreadful blood!" I cried.

He stared at me wildly, terror in his eyes. Then he said softly: "Be calm, my dearest. I see what you mean. It was not blood; it was red ink. A bottle with a little red ink in it has been spilled on the photographs.'

This was too much; not blood but red ink. Not murder, I suppose, but just a little red ink. I burst out laughing, and that laugh of mine sounded in my own ears as the most horrible sound they had ever heard.

I was worse for some days after this incident, but early spring was bringing glory and freshness to the earth; and somehow a little of her sweetness crept even into my heart and revived it. I rallied. I was able to go out again, and, leaning on my husband's arm, to stroll through the gardens and see the little leaves and blossoms leap up to welcome the spring. Sometimes I felt only a soft melancholy,

looking at them and feeling I should never watch them leap up in their glad homage again. Next spring Marcus would stand a lonely man among them. No poor loving wife would be with him, her heart breaking with his secret, which she betrayed not even to himself.

"Doctor Winsley recommends your riding, Lucy," he said. He was quite cheerful now in seeing me better. "I have sent for a horse, which I think will be quiet and gentle enough for you. I shall ride it myself to-morrow with a side-saddle and long garment. You will like to ride, my dearest, will you not?"

"Yes, Marcus," I replied submissively. Ah! how I loved riding once, and he heard me say so, but I cared for nothing now. I would ride if he wished it, that was all.

The following morning the horse was brought round to the hall door, and I stood on the steps to see Marcus mount him en amazone; a long shawl floated from the saddle, and he sat sideways with his leg over the crutch. It was a very pretty cream coloured creature, and he rode off from the door looking back at me, smiling, and waving his hand.

That was how he left me—but ah! how did he return?

Time passed, but I did not count the minutes. Sometimes I did a few stitches of the crochet work I held in my hand; and then I leant back in my chair and dreamed waking dreams while the quiet tears to which my eyes were so well accustomed rolled silently down over my cheeks.

"How long will it last?" I thought sadly. "How long will youth within me fight with death? And what will he do when I leave him? Oh, my poor Marcus. And as I thought this *something* came in sight on the road leading to the house. Or, rather, I opened my eyes and saw the something, which had been a few minutes in sight, for it was pretty near the house when I first beheld it. Men, two or three perhaps, huddled close together, and bearing a burden.

What was it they were carrying? As they approached I distinctly saw that it was a man, and another minute revealed to me with equal distinctness the figure and the dress. It was my husband.

For a second or two I was utterly incredulous. I saw him quite plainly and I did not believe that I had seen him at all. Then, with a great leap, my heart saw as well as my eyes, and stood still as suddenly as it had leapt. I knew I had fainted at less things, but I could not afford to faint then. I had no "leisure to be sick." I was out of the room and down stairs, with a strength I did not know I possessed, and met them just as they were carrying him into the drawing-room and placing him on a sofa.

His face was white, his eyes shut, and he did not seem to breathe. He had fainted, of course. I ran up to him, but they tried to take me away.

"Do not come. For Heaven's sake go away. It is too late; it will kill you too."

I thought the men were saying these things to me; the words sounded in my ears in a sort of chorus, but what were the words to me? It was Marcus I wanted; he was there, I was with him, and it did not matter what anyone said.

"The Doctor will be back in a few minutes," one of the men cried. "He went home for something for you, poor thing; not for him."

"Go away; please go away," was all I replied.

I think they spoke together and agreed to leave me till the Doctor came. I think they said it was only for a few minutes, and would not harm me, and it might be best. I am not sure, but I think some such words were ringing in my ears.

I knew well, however, that I was alone with him; and, flinging myself on my knees beside him, I covered his cold, white face with those kisses that I had not given before. One prominent feeling in my mind was a keen remorse that I had withheld them.

These kisses had a wonderful power. He opened his eyes and smiled, and at that moment the Doctor came in. Ah, I did not want him; I was the best doctor. Could he restore life as I had done? Doctor Winsley looked surprised at his patient. I believe he had never thought to see his eyes open again, but what do doctors who confine their studies to matter know of spiritual power?

He was to be arranged on the sofa so as to prevent the necessity of his being carried to his bed, and Doctor Winsley did scarcely more than so arrange him, and order that he should be given stimulants and strong beef-tea at short intervals. He beckoned me out of the room when he left, and broke to me very tenderly that the case was hopeless, and beyond the skill of doctor or nurse. There would probably be a rally, and he would recover the power of speech and might be able to express all his last wishes; but no more than that was possible. There were internal injuries, and life could not last for many hours. It was a case of hours, not of days.

I listened as one in a dream. I suppose I was stunned, or it was the calmness of despair; I don't know. I have not an idea what I felt. I think I felt nothing, and yet I certainly understood that Marcus was to die.

The separation was what I had ever been looking forward to, but not thus. I had expected my own death—but *his!* I understood, but perhaps I did not believe; I was quiet; I said nothing. I cannot tell why Doctor Winsley was frightened and made me sit down and swallow brandy, and felt my pulse and looked deep into my eyes, murmuring to himself, "Poor thing, poor thing," and then charged me not to be a moment alone with him, as I was unfit, most unfit. I shook my head and told him I felt quite strong, and should watch by him myself, and no one must disturb us. He said he would look in again to see how I was: I noticed he did not say how *he* was; and then he went away.

I continued perfectly composed; I did not shed a tear; and I went back to him. I think the shock must have stunned my brain.

His eyes were open, and he was perfectly conscious.

"Dear," he said, "I feel much better. I can talk to you, but I know it cannot last. I heard every word he said to you."

His senses must have been preternaturally sharpened, as is sometimes the case in illness or after accidents, or he could not have heard.

I sat down by him and, taking his hand in mine, kissed him.

"Marcus, I don't believe you will die," I said, and I was surprised when I found I had said it. I did not know I was going to utter those words. Had I spoken as one does to soothe the sick? or did I really not believe it?

"Yes, I am. This is the rally he spoke of. My Lucy, I must leave you." How tenderly he looked at me. "My guardian angel, my sweet wife, I must leave you alone."

"I don't believe you will die," I repeated, and this time consciously and in full faith. Was it from the sound of the words that I had accepted their meaning? Or how was it that I did not believe it?

"I have a secret to tell you before I leave you," he sighed heavily. "I will not die with a secret between us."

"Oh, my love, I will save you the confession," I thought. "Poor fellow, poor Marcus, I will save you *that*."

I stooped over and whispered very low, while shivers ran through me and my heart beat, now fast, now faint:

"I know it."

The colour came into his white face.

"You know it?" he cried. He half raised himself and then sank back again. "No, no, you do not—and I must not lose time. My dearest, when did you see me first? You will tell me at Westbeed."

I interrupted him. "In the garden at my father's Rectory," I whispered, breathless.

How he looked at me, and how he continued to look when I added: "On the second of June, four years ago."

His gaze turned into one of amazement, almost of joy.

"You have known it all this time?" he said wonderingly. I thought he hardly realised what it was, or there would not have been that joy in his face; but perhaps he was too weak to do so.

"Not all the time. Since you left me for Paris. I found my Bible in your drawer. I read what you had written."

I spoke in little sentences; I felt as if I should never breathe freely again. His eyes did not leave my face for a moment; he seemed taking in the meaning of my words more through them than by his ears.

"You have known it all this time," he cried. "I have often longed to tell you, but dared not. My darling, why did not *you* tell *me?*"

I hardly knew then why I had not told him; my brain was confused, but something made me answer: "I dared not either."

"I want to let you know the story," he said, "and I have not much time. You know there was always a quarrel, and he treated my mother so badly after my father's death—you know how I loved my mother. I was half mad with anger, and I was a wild fellow—I have told you that before, Lucy; always in some scrape or another. I tried to *make* him do her justice. It was money she *ought* to have, and he kept it, from some legal quibble or other. I left my regiment. I had been laid up with some trifling illness and was supposed to be still in my own room. A good fellow, Morley, a brother officer, was to conceal my absence and to let me know the minute matters looked dangerous. I got off in a smuggler's craft disguised as a sailor—my regiment was in the Isle of Man. I was like a schoolboy out on a freak. It was the fun of the thing I liked, though in a rage with my uncle, and determined to beard him—poor fellow."

Here I gave him some of the nourishment ordered; he swallowed it and continued his story:

"I saw him and he refused everything. I said I would *make* him do it, but I had to run off, for somebody came. Later in the day I got a telegram, mysteriously worded and addressed to a false name, from Morley, bidding me return at once or all would be discovered and I a ruined man, a disgraced soldier. My craft agreed for a consideration to sail with the first tide next morning. I tracked Sir John to the wood, and again demanded my mother's money. He refused—I threatened—he pointed his gun at me, saying he was afraid of his life. I saw that mine was really in danger, jumped at him, and caught hold of the gun; he wrested it from me, and when in his hand it went off. The next moment a man, who did not know me, had me by the throat, crying out, 'You have murdered him;' and after a deadly scuffle, I flung him off. You see, if I was taken or stopped, and Sir John told who I was or anything, I was ruined and disgraced for ever. So I just took to my heels and fled—I ran for my life. I did not know my poor uncle had shot himself in wresting his gun from me, but I soon found there was a hue and cry after me, which made me fear something bad had happened. Ah, my dear, you know the rest."

It was wonderful how Marcus had rallied, and with what spirit and fire he told his story. But what wonder could compare with the change wrought in the mind of the girl who listened to him. The whole world was transformed again. A miracle had been worked. He was innocent!

A flood of joy and gratitude rushed over me. I found no difficulty in believing now. There was no stunned feeling, no impossibility. The wonder was that I had ever thought him guilty. He! Marcus! my husband! the noblest of men.

I covered his dear hands with kisses in humble reverence.

"I was such a bad fellow," he said, smiling and stroking my hair; "or, if not bad, such a thoughtless harum-scarum fool. You saved me,

little wife—you, with your innocent face, your generous actions and your Book, for I kept my promise. I read it every day; I did indeed. If I am a better fellow now, it is your doing."

Was ever any creature in the world so happy as I for that one blissful minute? And then I suddenly recollected that he was going to die.

It could not be. God could not be so cruel. Just as we were again happy, in the moment that my own Marcus was given back to me, God would not take him from me.

I clung to him, I whispered in his ear: "I know you will live; I know you will live."

As for me, strength had returned to me in a wonderful manner. I had been wasting away from the hopelessness of my sorrow. With hope, the power of recovery came back. I sat by him and kept giving him the nourishment and stimulant from time to time. And by-and-by he fell asleep, and still I sat by him, while my heart went up to God in prayer and praise.

Doctor Winsley called late to see me, not Marcus. He could not believe his eyes when he found him not only alive, but in a calm, profound slumber. Beckoning me out of the room, he insisted that Sir James Paget should be telegraphed for at once.

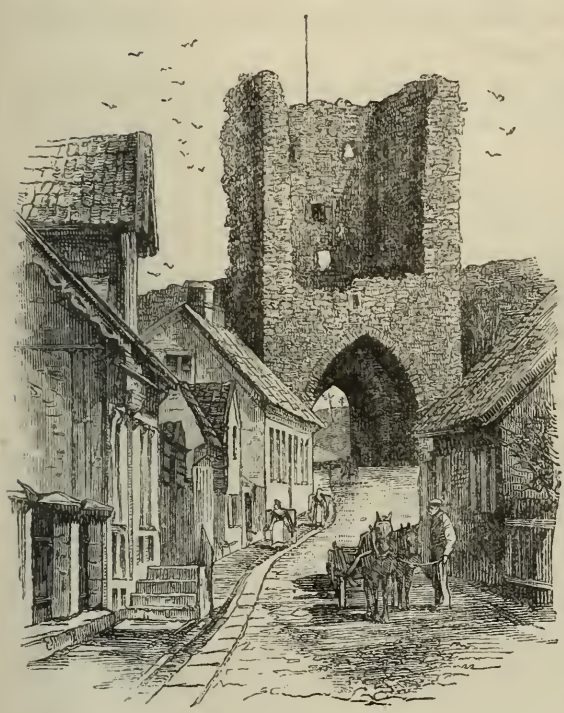
"There is not the internal injury I apprehended. I have mistaken the case," he said gently. "I should like another opinion, and that the best that can be had. It is a most unusual case, but I hope for the best."

"I knew he would recover," I said calmly; but notwithstanding my calm words, floods of happy tears burst from my eyes.

And I was right. He recovered, and the accident left no bad effects behind, though Sir James agreed with Doctor Winsley that it was "a most unusual case." And I got well, too; happiness is a worker of miracles, and I was the happiest girl in England. By-and-by I confessed to my husband what I had believed when I found my Bible, and he said he only loved me the better for my devotion, and called me a heroine, whose heroism had nearly cost her life. But the only sorrow I now have in the world is that anything should have made me believe that my husband was ——I cannot write the word. I am so glad that the belief almost killed me. And if it had done so quite it would be no more than I deserved, and the verdict on my death ought to have been given in the three expressive words: "Served her right!"

UNDER NORTHERN SKIES.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," &c.



Wisby.

ONCE again we set sail from Stockholm. This time our destination was Gotland, also an island of the Baltic. In its way, is it not the most wonderful of all islands? Yet how few seem to know anything about it. They have heard of such a place, they may tell you; perhaps will indicate its position on the map; believe that the title of the King of Sweden's second son is Duke of Gotland; and there it ends. Yet if Gotland were only a little more accessible: if its shores were washed by the waters of the English Channel instead of those of the Baltic: it would be thought one of the wonders of the world.

We left Stockholm about five o'clock in the evening. For the first and only time in our experience the air on Malar Lake was warm. The beauties of the lake were at their best. It was nothing short of an earthly paradise. Time went on, and a glorious sunset flushed earth and sky. Islands and the wooded shores were bathed in gold. The colours of the waters would have composed a rainbow. They are no ordinary sunsets, in these northern skies; skies varying every moment almost like the changes of a kaleidoscope. If they are brighter than usual old sailors say there is going to be a change of weather. No change to-night could have been for the better, and we hoped no change was in store.

Malar Lake seems to have innumerable outlets, and this evening we soon turned into new waters. Now, in narrow straits, we almost touched the shore and looked far up into the deepening forest glades. Then we launched out upon wide crescents and circles. But always and at all times we were surrounded by a solitary, deserted land. Towns or villages there were none; few signs of life; a world given

up to itself, where the wild birds build and sing. The hours vanished until all light and colour fled from the sky, and darkness fell. About ten o'clock we launched out into the Baltic.

Just before doing so, a passenger landed at a settlement consisting of a solitary lighthouse and a small cottage or two for the keepers. A brig lay at anchor in the sheltered waters, and our passenger, her skipper, had been to Stockholm concerning freight. As soon as we were in sight, a boat shot out from her, came alongside, and before long we had left them far behind.

Our steamer was small, but not uncomfortable. Her captain was rough and hardy, but thoughtful as though he had had the politest

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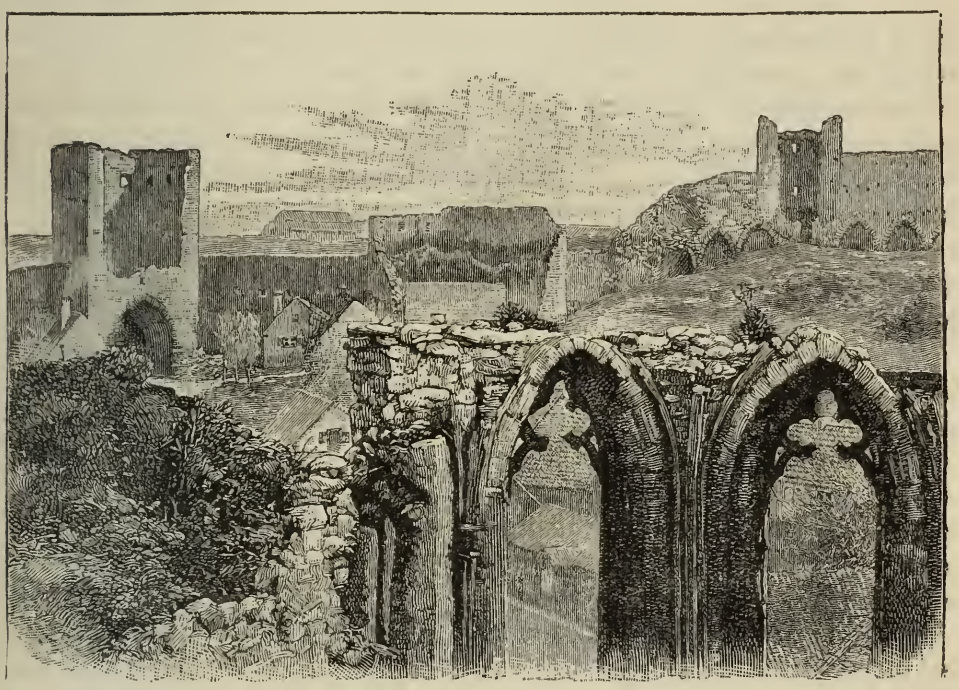
training in the world. One old man, also a passenger, spoke excellent English. He, too, had passed his life on the troubled waters, and had been to Stockholm to seek cargo for his brig, lying in Wisby harbour. But he had not been successful, and declared that times were changed. Brokers and shippers wanted their freights carried for nothing, and the system did not pay.

He was an amusing old man, with a good deal of dry humour; appeared to have gone through life with a certain amount of observation, and gave us the benefit of his wisdom. His weird tales of the people, at home and abroad, were endless; adventures that made one's hair stand on end, and stories that caused one's flesh to creep. He abounded in murders and suicides that had come within his own knowledge; records of people who had disappeared overboard on dark nights, without rhyme or reason, or had been spirited away, none ever knew how or where.

So we supped upon horrors unfolded with dramatic power; and his quaint humour and sayings shortened the night. The stars were brilliant. Our vessel in the open sea rolled and strained uneasily, though there was little swell upon the water. But she was small and narrow and lightly charged. In some of their rough seas a passage in her would prove an ordeal to be recorded. It blew cold, too, upon these wider waters, under the dark night sky. There was no warmth in all those flashing, trembling stars, though much beauty. The skipper, thoughtful as I have described him, had rugs brought up for our benefit, and seats placed under the lee of his cabin on the bridge. There we sat and chatted and listened to



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creeping tales, far into the small hours. The stewardess brought us coffee; the skipper in largeness of heart insisted upon adding cognac. In the rare intervals of silence we listened to the throb of the engines, the rush of the paddles ploughing the wide waste. But there came a moment when even the skipper and his old chum—they had been boys together at sea fifty years ago—thought it time to turn in. An hour or two's sleep would enable one the better to appreciate the wonders of Gotland.

About five o'clock the next morning we entered Wisby harbour: a scene to be remembered. The sun had risen; all the freshness of early morning was upon the earth. The place was still sleeping. It looked a dead world as we steamed up within the long breakwater. Twice dead, for above the houses of the town, sharply outlined against the clear morning sky, were wonderful and romantic ruins:

ruin upon ruin. Singular-looking minaret towers uprose above all else, like the towers of an Eastern mosque. The houses, built on slopes, appeared one above another. The whole was encircled by ancient massive walls, with towers and gateways at frequent intervals. We might have been approaching some Eastern city, and almost expected to be greeted by dark-skinned Moors in flowing garb.

At the landing-place a small crowd of some twelve or fifteen people had assembled. No flashing Orientals draped in abbas; nothing at all half as picturesque; only ordinary Northern folk, calm and quiet: half of them town boys, always first on the alert in scenes of excitement.

The hotels—such as they are in Wisby—had not awakened, and there was no one in this small crowd to represent them. We felt adrift, until the skipper and his old chum recommended us to a house where we should be comfortable, if nothing more. There was no restaurant attached to it, said they, but everything of that sort would be found in the town. So we departed with a guide, who certainly was the very opposite to anything Eastern or interesting.

He led the way up the quay, through narrow turnings, over the most horribly paved streets in the world. All houses and windows were closed, doors barred against invasion.

We reached our quarters, at the foot of a sharp ascent, paved, as usual in Wisby, with stones like petrified eggs, hard end upwards. The house was closed. We knocked for admission. Hollow sounds echoed through a long passage, but no other response. We repeated the summons. Presently, distant, shuffling footsteps, a growl like the first roll of thunder, bolts impatiently undrawn, accompanied by what sounded like strong language, but was probably only a Wisby form of welcome and benediction.

The door half opened, and a startling head of hair appeared, as if its owner had also supped all night upon horrors. This was the general factotum of the house; a man who would do everything or nothing for you, according as you made it worth his while.

Our guide took up the tale. He was really a decent specimen, though not outwardly favoured, and in an unknown tongue soundly rebuked our lazy doorkeeper for his sluggard ways. He talked with such good effect that the sleepy eyelids opened their widest, the affrighted door did likewise; we were admitted and escorted to rooms above, neat, clean and satisfactory. Our foothold in Wisby was secured.

Gotland, it may at once be remarked, is the exact opposite to Bornholm. The interest of the latter lies not in its capital, but is spread over the whole island. The interest of Gotland, on the contrary, centres in Wisby, and the remainder of the island is comparatively uninteresting, barren, dreary and unproductive; given over to great stretches of moorland, to peat fields, dark and gloomy, yet with a certain fine tone about them reminding one of the Shetland

moors. But Shetland has hills and slopes and long-drawn undulations cleaving the sky, singularly attractive in their lonely charm. Gotland is flat, unfertile, with a great deal of barren, stony, unromantic ground. It has its cultivated portions, and agriculture is one of its sources of industry; but the general impression of the island is not one of prosperity and abundance. The fields of golden corn, the sweet clover and scented hay, the laughing, happy haymakers, which had so charmed and gladdened one's heart and eyes in Bornholm, were here conspicuous by their absence.

But how sing the charms of Wisby? What other country had such a capital? Such an accumulation of ruins, such wonderful and perfect old walls? It stands alone in the world.

Wisby loudly proclaims its antiquity. Gotland was once the key of the Baltic, a centre of commerce and industry. It waxed rich and great. The stream of industry between Asia and Western Europe flowed past Gotland, and made it prosperous and important. This was about the eleventh century. The earlier history of Wisby is unknown, but is supposed to date back to the eighth century.

About the thirteenth century a good deal of the Eastern trade diverted to Southern Europe and began to find its way round the Cape of Good Hope. This was before the time of the Crusades. The prosperity of Gotland was affected, but she was still to remain flourishing for a season. Then she grew proud, forgetting that before Honour is Humility, separated from Sweden, declared her independence.

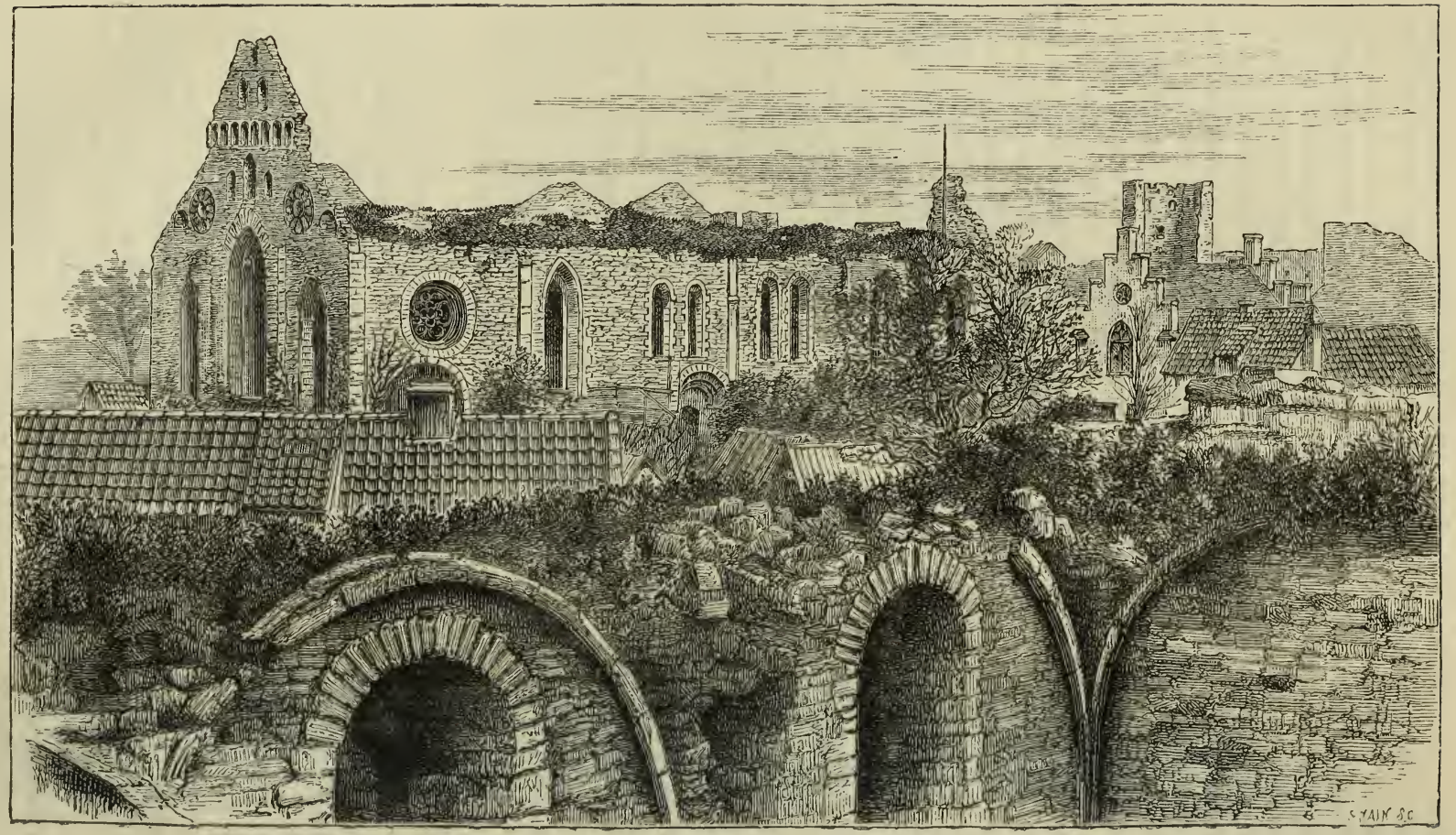
Perhaps this, more than anything else, contributed to her downfall.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, she possessed many convents, eighteen churches, and was surrounded by massive walls, guarded by great gateways and numerous watch-towers. It is the wonderful ruins of these churches, and the wonderful walls and towers, that can yet scarcely be called ruins, that form to-day the unrivalled attraction of Wisby.

After declaring its independence, it was attacked and plundered by Waldemar, King of Denmark. Nearly 2,000 of its people were slain and many of its treasures were carried off in shiploads. But the principal treasure boat was lost in a great storm, and went down to enrich the palaces of the mermaids at the bottom of the deep blue sea. If one could only dive and gather these bright glistening gems that lie there "unrecked of and in vain!"

After this, Wisby went through vicissitudes and disturbances, and gradually declined. Trade and prosperity left her, wealth diminished, her influence ceased. She grew feeble and died out. But she has left standing this wealth of Gothic ruins which make her one of the most remarkable towns in the world, without a rival.

Our first care that morning was to discover a means of breaking our fast, for we were ourselves rapidly qualifying for ruins. A restaurant was discovered near our rooms, and good, bad or indif-



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ferent, as it might be, we boldly entered. A maiden declared that breakfast was quite possible, accompanied by every earthly delicacy. This was a libel on her part, but never mind; no doubt she spoke according to her lights.

She was spreading one of the many tables, when in came the landlady, with a very civilised reverence for this out of the world spot. Next she attacked the maiden all forlorn for thus setting for the "quality." Her jargon sounded like so much Chinese; but to E. it was perfectly intelligible and very amusing. We were transferred to an inner room two steps higher in the world, here evidently a distinction something like the ancient above and below the salt. If anything, it was less comfortable, for we were nearer the kitchen. Frying, baking, and brewing of coffee was going forward. When the door opened, sounds and scent and a heated air mingled their charms, and made themselves more free than welcome of our neighbourhood.

It all passed away. When we went forth again, Wisby was waking up. Life began to stir, doors and windows to open, the business of the day commenced. It was not at any time bustling or noisy, crowded or distracting. We had the place largely to ourselves. But it plunged us in a dream of wonder and romance which remained as long as the walls and ruined churches, watch towers and old gateways were present to mesmerise us with their singular charm and influence.

The town itself is well situated upon the sea, and the walks by the shore are very interesting. On the one hand, the ever-flashing and restless water; on the other, rising walls, towers, and ruins conspicuous above the houses. Ruins crumbling with the burden of centuries. Here a pointed archway, framing the sky; there a long, roofless church, moss grown, with an east wall still standing more perfect than all the rest, beautiful with pointed windows and Gothic tracery, and perhaps a rose with nothing left of it but the outer circle. Towers meet the eye everywhere, square and castellated, many of them broken away into crumbling, ivy-crowned fragments.

In your walks about the town you are constantly coming, most unexpectedly, upon one of these ruins. Many of them are closely surrounded by houses, and all sorts of impossible little courts and alleys. Opening a door at a venture you suddenly come upon one of these courts, with perhaps a trailing vine about it, to make it green and fresh and beautiful. At the end, if you go down, you are bewildered by the presence of a great ruin of which you had no previous conception. Under its very shadow the poor live in crowds, very indifferent to its charms, or to anything except the daily struggle for existence.

The ruins seem to multiply. You turn a corner, and at the end of a bit of quaint street is one of the old gateways, with massive tower and loopholes, the upper part half in ruins. On your left

hand is a Gothic arch, also part of a ruined church, standing almost alone, full of refinement. On your right, carrying your eye upwards, you observe the encircling walls with all their towers. Most conspicuous of all, because so different in style, are the minarets of the cathedral, which throw an Eastern glamour and atmosphere over the whole town.

The streets are, many of them, full of an interest of their own. They are built without plan or design ; narrow, tortuous, up and down hill, horribly paved, yet of great charm : the charm of antiquity. Some of the houses date back to the Middle Ages, and remind one of Nuremberg. But Nuremberg, wonderful as the old town is, has none of the charm of these ruins, which make of Wisby an artistic Gothic paradise.

What matter if the rest of the island be comparatively barren and deserted ? Within the walls of Wisby you are independent of all outer influence. If you have not nature, you have art in perfection, in its most beautiful and refined, most rare form and aspect : the beautifying and decaying work of centuries. Ruins that are perfect, because hitherto untouched by renovation.

To walk the streets in thin boots is an expiation severe as any practised by ancient monks. The hired carriages, clumsily built, tear up and down the narrow, stony thoroughfares with a crash that would wake the dead. They cut corners short, and swirl round curves as if pursued by a legion of demons. You are sent flying right and left in your seat, with a vengeance that would shake the very teeth out of your head, and are only saved from shipwreck by a vigorous clutch at the woodwork ; just as a despairing rider hangs on to the mane of his horse. Happily you are soon out of the town, away in the open country, where your shattered frame has some chance of recovery, and your ruffled plumage gradually settles down.

The climate is very mild, and many flowers fruits and vegetables grow here that find no place elsewhere. We landed on market day, and market is held in the old square, under the walls and shadow of the cathedral. Buyers and sellers were diligently at work. Country barrows, drawn by donkeys and the small horses for which Gotland is famous, groaned under their weight of wares. Small, sour cherries, abundance of currants and gooseberries, splendid vegetables, blushing and blooming flowers. There was much fish also, very good of its kind. Half the market-place was given up to ironmongery, and crockery and pottery spread out on straw for the temptation of extravagant housewives. There was a sound in the air of many voices, and the donkeys frequently brayed as if determined not to be outdone in this matter. The people were quaint and countrified, but clean and healthy looking, and many of the women wore curious head-dresses and gold ornaments. Most of these had come in with their poultry and butter and eggs ; small eggs, worthy of the very small fowl that lay beside them.

Our little guide was astonished at our interest in the market. But in truth it was not only amusing, it was the only sign of life and small excitement we had found in this veritable Dead City of the Baltic. He was a neat little guide, with a sunny face, amiable and honest looking, who conversed rapidly with E., and resorted to signs when he particularly wished to impress the unfortunate Englishman, who had no Swedish, and was evidently an object of compassion. The rough pavement seemed a delight to him; his feet flew over the sharp stones, in search of keys or information, as if they had been softest lawn.

He led us to the sea walks, and showed us where the mulberries grew in abundance, on trees like currant bushes. But the fruit was not yet ripe. "Before I come or after I am gone, the roses always bloom." There were chestnut trees also, and fruit-laden vines growing in the open air, of which the people are very proud.

The keys of the ruins—for they are kept locked—are in the custody of the hospital porter. Of course he was not to be found. His vrouw thought he might be in the market, or he might be elsewhere. This seemed probable. He was certainly playing truant, for evidently he was not at his post. Should we like to go over the hospital? But we had had experiences of hospitals in remote places; sights that remained unfading: especially one of Santiago recollection: and declined the offer. Why harrow one's feelings when no good is to come of it?

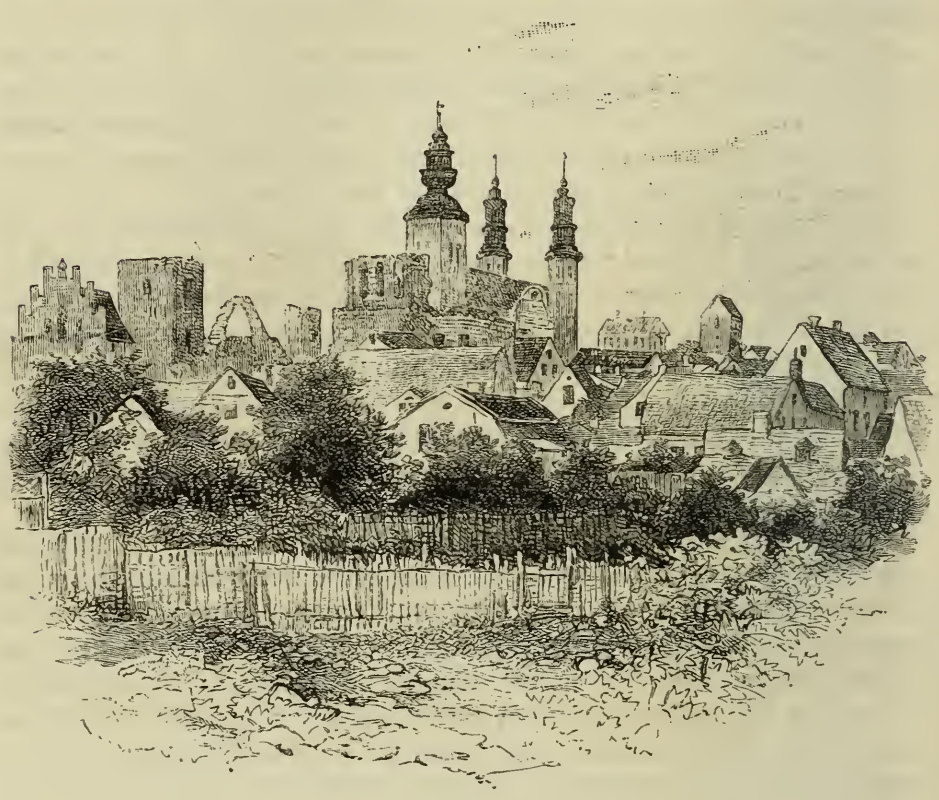
Our nimble little guide at last found the errant door-keeper in a house not far off. The walls bore a sign, and the windows an intimation that beer and wine were dispensed there. The good man had been innocently enjoying himself. The care of the hospital and the contemplation of the ruins were depressing influences. He came out in the best of humours, quite at our service. The keys were in his possession. Like a wise man, he never parted with them. Not a weighty bunch, but two small duplicates, at whose touch, like an Open-Sesame, all gates flew back.

Some of the gates were already open, and the ruins in the hands of the restorers: those despoilers of the beautiful that are sometimes necessary. One ruin, especially, was being thoroughly overhauled, and from a height there came down a huge bit of stone so close to our heads that, accompanied by a far off demoniacal laugh, it looked very much as if chance had not had much to do with the adventure. Another inch or two, and not possessing Irishmen's skulls, we should certainly have been conveyed to the hospital, forever unconscious to all its inner sights and sounds. The mason evidently meant to give us a fright, but he might have done more. We beat a wholesome retreat, but the overseer, coming in at the very moment, administered such a wordy castigation to the unseen Vulcan, that for some time to come his evil propensities must have had rest.

Our older guide pointed out all the beauties of the ruins, which,

indeed, needed no interpreter. Crumbling remains of Gothic tracery ; exquisite oriel windows, still perfect with the exception of the glass ; ornamentation often delicate as lace work, in all the refinement of age and partial decay. Wonderful arches standing alone, spanning the whole ruin from north to south, framing the east walls and windows beyond. Delicate flying arches, sometimes three or four of them, one behind another. Crumbling walls and masonry on all sides, often ivy-laden.

We mounted some of them by unseen staircases in the towers



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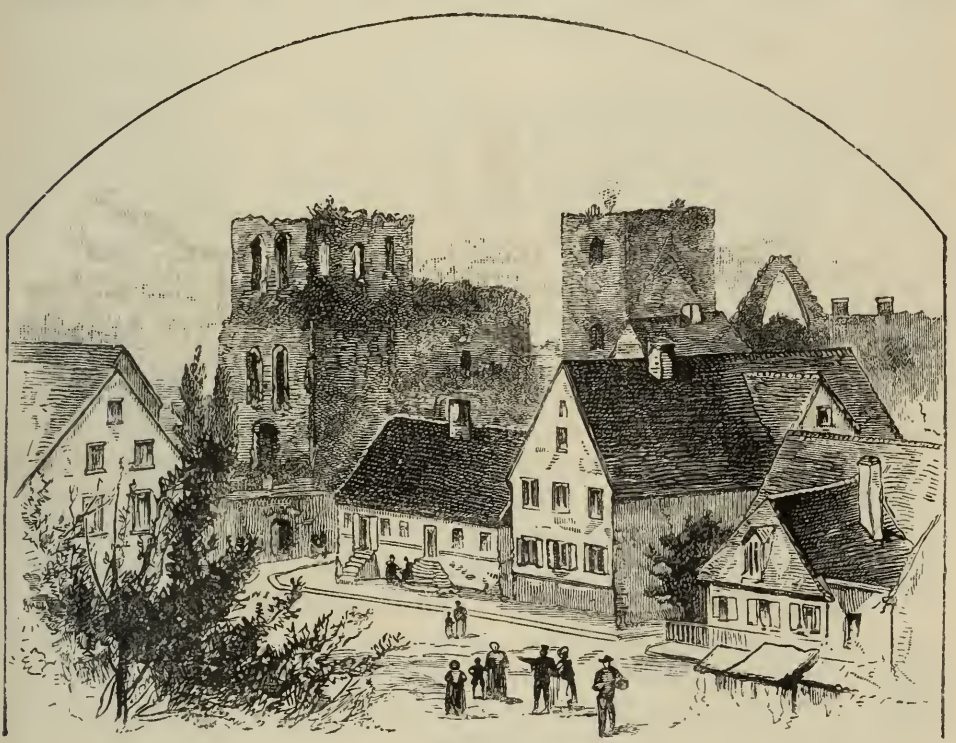
fragments of stone steps now hardly yielding foothold. Outside, we trod the narrow ways, giddy with the height and a sense of insecurity.

The view was wonderful. All around and about us were the ruins. Conspicuous above all stood out the white walls and minaret towers of the cathedral. At our feet, the small, curious town, its mazy streets, narrow and uneven ; steep slopes where the houses rose one above another, often seemed falling into each other. Surrounding all were the old walls with their watch-towers and gateways.

Of the forty-eight towers once standing, thirty-eight are still sufficiently perfect to look formidable. Some have been turned into store-rooms ; others are inhabited. They date back to the thirteenth century, yet are not the original walls of Wisby. Beyond the walls is the "Gallows Hill," where, formerly, people were put to death and

buried; and here a ruined church—the only one outside the walls—is robbed of its just romance by so melancholy an association. The small harbour of the town, the strong breakwater, the flashing sapphire sea beyond, complete an unrivalled picture.

Wisby has so shrunken, deteriorated and died out, that half the space within her walls has become barren and unoccupied. At night all is mysteriously dark and silent, and the shadows of the great walls impress one uncomfortably. The deserted portion is unlighted. Even the chief streets have nothing better than a long pole supporting a branch of iron, looking itself very much like a gallows intended for



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sacrifice. Into this an oil lamp is placed, which just serves to make darkness visible.

When the moon is full, Wisby is at its best. She shines with a pure, cold light upon all these ruins, and they look like what they are, ghosts and remnants of a departed world. Every detail is subdued and softened and made wonderfully romantic by the pale light, so intensely bright and silvery under these northern skies. From the hill above the cathedral, the view is matchless; "Change and decay in all around I see," you may well exclaim; whilst the dark unchanging sea beyond is made visible by the moonbeams.

That afternoon we had left the ruins and the town and dismissed our little guide for a time. Committing ourselves to the tender mercies of a primitive driver, and the mercies of a "Victoria," primitive also, but not tender, we had dashed and crashed up the hilly

streets, and passed through one of the great solemn gateways out into the country. Fridhem, a place some miles from Wisby, was the object of our ambition. It is inhabited by Princess Eugénie, sister of the King of Sweden, and is the only place on the island of the least importance.

The road led through a barren, uninteresting country, beside the one railway Wisby has had the enterprise to construct: a narrow-gauge single line, about five miles long. We passed many a stony field, where it seemed hopeless to look for cultivation, varied now and then by a plantation of stunted fir trees. The sea to our right was seldom visible. After a good deal of such monotonous and unchanging scenery, we found ourselves at Fridhem. A very retired spot and the perfection of a summer retreat. In winter it must be equally depressing. The house was large for Gotland, built of wood, and deliciously cool and pleasant looking. It was surrounded by trees, except where it faced the sea, which broke almost at its very foundations. The cliff was high, and a sloping bank and staircases led down to the shore. A verandah ran the whole length of the house. Here one could sit the live-long day, revelling in sunshine and blue sky and sparkling sea, in perfect quiet and repose. There was a studied wildness about the grounds far better than any arrangement of a precise order, and one was free to wander about at will. Just beyond them was the highest point of the island, where you might throw yourself on the grassy slopes and gaze for ever upon the boundless sea, the "sounding ocean." Here, too, were steps in the rocky cliffs to conduct you to the white, dazzling beach, where to-day the blue water broke in quiet ripples, kindliest and most wooing of its moods.

After this, Jehu turned inland. The scenery was always the same; monotonous and unproductive. Sometimes we came to larger and deeper plantations, and that was all. Long roads bordered by flat fields, and never so much as a hill or an undulation. But presently we did reach a hill, and the second object in our drive. It was at the end of a short by-road, and formed part of a small estate. "Upon this hill there grew a tower," from which we saw the whole island stretched out as a map. Here we at once realised the difference between Gotland and Bornholm. Nothing arrested the eye except its churches dotted about, many of which are old and interesting to the antiquarian, but very different from the round churches of Bornholm.

At our feet in this singular spot was a tomb in the midst of the garden, the eccentric idea of a former proprietor. A large mausoleum, and through wrought iron gates one saw coffins, great and small, marked with gold letters. A melancholy object; yet the whole neighbourhood was so deserted by the living that it seemed scarcely an unmeet resting-place for the dead.

We were not sorry to find our drive coming to an end. Approaching Wisby, the walls stood out with all their charm and singular

influence. It was difficult as ever to realise that these were Northern latitudes, and we were carried in spirit to the land of the Moor. There uprose a vision of Tangiers. There, outside the walls, we had seen caravansaries, camels in every attitude and every stage of burden, patient, meek-looking creatures; stalwart, handsome Orientals, neither meek nor patient, with flashing eyes and long beards, wrapped in their abbas, wrangling and bargaining with each other. One almost expected to come upon the same thing here; but all was silent and abandoned, and the Eastern vision gave place to the colder realities of the North. The ground without the walls of Wisby was deserted and barren as a sandy plain; immediately within them, a portion of the uninhabited, unused territory was devoted to nothing more romantic than a rope walk.

We were glad to return to the streets, the evidences of a dead world, the signs of a living. In the evening we went down to the breakwater, a solid piece of masonry made to resist immense seas. Outside, to break the force of the waves, it was supported by huge blocks of granite, simply thrown down and allowed to lie there.

We watched a sunset from the end of the stone-work. Before us the wide sea stretched far as eye could reach. The sky grew red and angry, with magnificent wave-like clouds that varied every moment with the growing twilight. Presently, deep red flashes and beams, splendid and beautiful, shot upwards from the horizon: a display of the Northern Lights. Blood-red reflections, caught by the sea, were carried on by heaving rollers that followed each other with majestic sweep; followed and died out without breaking, only to give place to others. There were no angry waves to-night. Silence was on the sea, and solitude. Not a vessel in sight, scarcely a craft in the small harbour.

Above, rose the town, its outlines of minarets, towers and ruins mapped against the deepening sky. A matchless picture. Other places have their palaces and churches, a thousand and one attractions; no other place has this wonderful assemblage of ruins, all within a stone's throw of each other, embraced within a narrow area, surrounded by ancient walls with towers keeping watch and ward over their priceless treasures.

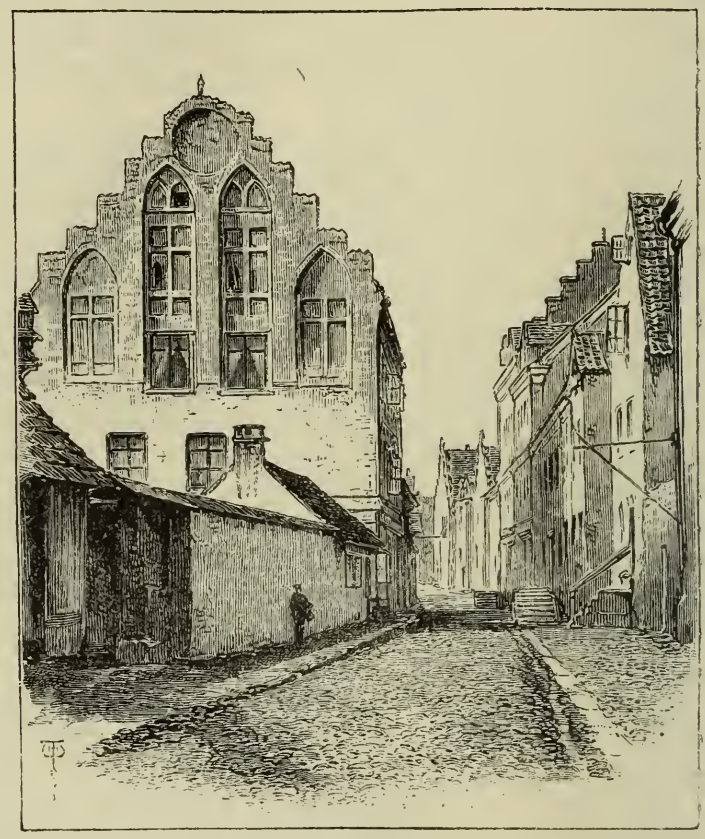
Darkness deepened, but those Northern Lights still flashed about the sky in silent, solemn grandeur. The moon rose still and pale, as if angry at the invasion of her realm; a round, silvery shield, beautiful as a dream, cold as death, lighting up a sleeping world.

We left it all in sorrow. We had seen nothing grander and more startling, more magnificent and supernatural than this display of the Aurora Borealis, in conjunction with the weird influence of the wonderful town. It was worthy of being a last impression of Wisby, and shall be the last recorded, though it was not our last day in the little capital of Gotland.

When we finally went down to the coast, our factotum, who had

sleepily admitted us that first morning, condescended to accompany us and carry our luggage. It cannot be said that we parted from him reluctantly. He was a man to be kept in good humour, and, being avaricious, there was only one way to his heart. However, in going through the world, one meets all sorts and conditions of men, and the tenth good man and true makes up for the nine unsatisfactory men that went before.

But we left Wisby without any sad reflections upon human nature; without any sad reflections of any sort, except regret for the end of



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our stay. It was altogether a different feeling from that with which we had seen Bornholm vanishing from sight. The one remains in the mind as an idyll, the other as a wonder. There we had left our heart, here our admiration. To both we should one day like to return. Each has its charm, each its privileges, each its powers of attraction. Nothing, indeed, can give greater pleasure than to explore the shores of the Baltic and make friends with the islands that repose in its waters.

As Bornholm had faded from our vision, so Wisby fell away, its ruins, towers and minarets, its Northern influence, its Eastern glamour. The vessel steamed out of the small harbour on its way to Stockholm. Presently night fell and closed the scene.

MERCEDES.

By Rosa Mackenzie Kettle, Author of "The Mistress of Langdale Hall," &c. &c.

I SCARCELY know how it happened that in the English village where I spent my childhood and early youth even the rustics learned to call me Doña Merçedes. I think it must have been their love for the courteous foreign officer which made them honour his daughter.

Our cottage was one of the tiniest abodes in that model village. The old Squire loved to see his tenants suitably housed. Under the thatched roofs peeped out dormer windows, and there were gardens to each dwelling, with neat back yards, and premises kept in absolute order. This was a matter of course. No one dared to be slovenly. The master's quick eye, as he rode down the long winding street, would have detected any irregularity.

Our modest abode was roomy enough for its three occupants, my father, myself, and our foreign servant. Nor was it likely that the military taste for neatness and symmetry, which was a leading feature in the Squire's nature, should be set at naught by his old friend and companion in arms.

Together they had gone through many a hard day's march and many a hard-fought battle in the great Peninsular struggle. Often they had slept on the bare ground of the stony Sierras, sharing the same hard couch, the same limited rations. In their fiery youth and manhood they had breasted bravely the storms of life; and now, in the same tranquil haven, though their estates were more unequal, they were going peacefully together down the vale of life.

The Squire in one respect was poorer than my father. He, too, was a widower, but childless. Often he would lay his long, thin fingers on my head, as I listened breathlessly to some story of long-past battle and adventure, and say softly: "Henriquez, what would I not give for a little son to match your tiny maiden!"

"Ay de mi, Merçedes! What will become of my little one?" were the last words uttered by the brave officer and sincere Christian, who, but for that one fear, would have received the last solemn order as calmly as in his earlier days he had obeyed the mandate of his superiors.

For my part, I thought of nothing but losing him. Though but a child, I had been his constant companion. Never had those closed lips uttered an unkind word, or those shrouded eyes looked on me otherwise than tenderly. It was my only comfort to think that I had never voluntarily given him trouble.

Now his friends showed me all possible kindness. I might have found a home in almost any house in the village, from the Hall and the Vicarage to the broad-eaved cottages in the shadowy street. But I could not part from Assunta, our faithful housekeeper; and my father had inspired me with a love of independence. I had been brought up in my mother's faith, that of the Church of England, her native country. My father had never changed his religion, but he reverenced the faith of his dead wife, and attended punctually the services in the only place of public worship within reach. Assunta was not so liberal, and I feared she might get into trouble with the domestics in another household. I therefore decided, as soon as I was able to come to any conclusion, that we would remain together and dwell in the little cottage under the park wall.

One favour I accepted gratefully. This was that I should complete my unfinished education—hitherto the pleasant task undertaken by my father—in company with the Vicar's daughter, a girl of my own age. Sybil Marchmont and I were fast friends. We suited each other exactly: all the more for being utterly unlike. She was fair and gentle, somewhat indolent. I was more like my foreign ancestors than my English mother. Assunta, who was foolishly proud of me, used to say when she brushed out my long, dark hair, or arranged the black mantilla which she put on in the Spanish fashion over my head and shoulders for my daily walks to the Vicarage: "Ah, there are many donzellas walking in Madrid with just that step and air!"

Those were happy days, after the grief of my first severe bereavement wore away. It seems to me as if the sun always shone over the Vicarage garden—in the green lanes there was always pleasant shadows, God over all in that cheerful home, and love in everything.

One grief, however, hung long over the village — the Squire's lingering, but not painful, illness. He used to ride through the streets till the very last, and often stopped to inquire after me. He never forgot his old friend's child, until the chords of memory were loosed, the golden bowl broken. Then the sound of the slow horse-hoofs under the elms ceased. He lay for a while tranquil, submissive, but sorely broken in mind and frame; and, finally, he too passed away. The hall remained unoccupied: the distant relative who inherited the property not caring to reside among us.

Very soon a difference became perceptible. The steward complained of the harsh, inconsiderate orders transmitted to him. Many a lordly oak and elm were felled in the park; tenants were receiving notices to quit; the rents were raised and worse changes threatened. The establishment at the hall was diminished. Mr. Marchmont was the next to leave us. A family living in a distant county, hitherto occupied by a relation, became his own.

Vaughan Darrell, a young man fresh from college, fond of field sports and society, a friend of the new Squire, had been chosen to

succeed our grave, much respected pastor. He would, probably, be a more congenial companion for his patron, if he ever condescended to visit us; but there seemed small ground to hope that the sick and needy, the careworn and unhappy would find the same comfort from his ministrations.

It was a great shock to us all the first time we saw him ride carefully up the street, with a number of sporting dogs in his wake. It was true that as yet he was only a visitor, Mr. Marchmont having kindly invited him to the Vicarage, to judge of its capabilities, and to introduce him to his new sphere of duty; but we none of us liked him. Sybil, especially, fled from him, and thereby prompted him to persecute her with unwelcome attentions. For myself, he scarcely noticed me, yet even his fine words were an offence. I heard him say to Mr. Marchmont: "An arrant Gipsy! She knows well enough how admirably that scarlet hood becomes her clear brown complexion and jolly looks! Merçedes—that means Mercy—why cannot she call herself by a suitable English name?"

"The young lady is partly Spanish. She has blue blood in her veins," said my kind friend, hurriedly, as they passed at a little distance in front of the alcove in which we were seated, along one of the laurel walks.

After Mr. Marchmont's departure I would have gone quite a mile out of my way rather than pass the Vicarage, and the tribe of barking hounds for ever about the doors. I could not avoid them altogether. In the lanes, in the meadows, in my favourite walks, through the lately deserted park, I was constantly meeting these riotous companions of the Vicar; and though he called them off and made ample apologies, I could willingly have dispensed both with them and their master's urbanity.

He certainly seemed to be doing his best to make acquaintance with his parishioners; and I think the people began soon to like him. "He was so neighbourly, and the dogs were that life-like;" and the men said if they did any mischief—killed an old dame's cat, or worried the hens—"he was ready enough to pay for it."

"A good young fellow enough, and hearty;" but there was none of the respect they had shown Mr. Marchmont in their way of speaking of his successor.

When my earliest friends had left the village, it crossed my mind, for the first time, that it was not well to be alone. Assunta could scarcely be called a companion. She was an old, very faithful, much-loved servant, but she was nothing more. I found also that, even for our quiet mode of life, the resources I had at my command were barely sufficient. I began to have misgivings as to the future, and to find the present state of things intolerably dull. So, without seeking counsel, I sent a carefully-worded advertisement to the *Times*, in which I described myself as an English lady,

thoroughly acquainted with the Spanish, Italian and Portuguese languages, and solidly educated; and offered my services as a travelling companion for young ladies wishing to go abroad.

Next I wrote to Mr. Molyneux, my father's banker in London; and I made all the necessary arrangements for installing Assunta as mistress of my cottage during my absence, packed up a trunk and portmanteau, visited all my poor pensioners—even at the risk of meeting the Vicar and his dogs—satisfied that I should soon bid them farewell for a season.

I was surprised, on opening Mr. Molyneux' reply to my letter informing him of my intentions, and asking him to answer any applications made to him on my behalf, to find myself addressed as "My dear Miss Mercy." I took up the envelope, but there was the familiar "Doña Merçedes," with my father's honoured name, just as usual.

His old friend very strongly advised me, however, in his kind letter, to lay aside this name for a time, and to call myself by some less remarkable appellation. "Merçedes meant Mercy," which was what our saucy young Vicar had said. Well, perhaps they were right. Rivers meant the same as Rios de Monte, and might serve my present purpose better.

My advertisement was answered; and, backed by Mr. Molyneux' certificate of merit, my services were accepted—though not exactly in the manner I had proposed.

A lady, widowed, with two young daughters, particularly wished for a chaperon for them, as she was unwilling at present to enter into society. She also desired for them instruction in Spanish. Her residence was in the North of England; her health extremely delicate. When, if ever, it was re-established, or if a warmer climate were recommended, she might wish to take the young ladies abroad, in which case Spain would be their destination.

I closed with this proposal, and travelled to my destination: the only objection respecting my appearance being that I was too young and pretty, at least so Lady Forsyth said, with a kindly glance and smile.

The accounts which reached me at intervals of further changes near my old home reconciled me to any little minor troubles in my new one. The hall had been completely transmogrified to suit the requirements of a Royal visitor, and more old oaks and beeches had been cut down to defray consequent expenses. It was reported that the Squire played deeply. He was mad about racing and yachting, the steward said. The estate might have to be sold, if he went on much longer in the same fashion.

I found myself, after a while, quite at home. Lady Forsyth was very rich, and she had only these two daughters, whom she had made co-heiresses. No fear of a second marriage, though she was

very fair and pleasant to look upon; much handsomer than either of my pupils, who were said to resemble their father—an opulent merchant, knighted on the presentation of an address to Her Majesty. The family was not an old one.

My girls were very docile and good-natured, but not pretty, or distinguished-looking. They seemed still mere children, though they were both grown-up; and one of them, I learned, after I had been with them some time, was even engaged to be married. It was a profound secret. Lady Forsyth told me of it as a mark of especial confidence; adding that Lucy was much too young—much too childish—to leave her at present. Other causes, she continued, pointed to the wisdom of postponing the wedding. Possibly it might never take place.

I do not think that either of those young sisters troubled herself with the idea of marriage, and the separation it must bring about. They were very much attached to each other, and to hosts of living creatures—pets of all kinds—which came and went at their bidding. Anna would spend hours searching for a lost rabbit or kitten; and Lucy made love to every bird in the brake or on the wing. I can see her now with hosts of pigeons circling round her fair head, or cooing, perched on her shoulders.

The sisters dressed alike; but Lucy wore round her neck a slender gold chain. The locket suspended from it was always concealed by the high bodice of her frock. It looked more like a school-girl's birthday gift, but perhaps it might be a love-token. Anna wore many ornaments, constantly changed and openly displayed. She was fond of turning her crosses and lockets round, and speaking of the friends from whom she had received them on birthdays and family festivals. Lucy wore but that one; and never, by any accident, touched or alluded to it. There was only one year's difference in their ages. In disposition there was a great similarity; only, sometimes, a little more seriousness in Lucy—a far-away expression in the soft grey eyes, a tender, sympathising tone of voice which might betoken that the still waters of her maiden life had been stirred.

It was Anna who first, in laughing tones, alluded to her sister's hidden ornament.

"Cannot you persuade Lucy, Miss Rivers, to wear something she is not ashamed to exhibit? It seems so foolish to hide that locket, and to put on nothing else. She has numbers of presents handsomer than mine."

I thought she was right, and that the attempt at concealment was more likely to provoke notice than the display of her invisible lover's gift; but when I approached the subject, Lucy was impenetrable.

"Oh yes! I have crosses and lockets like Anna's—plenty of them," she said, colouring to the roots of her fair hair. "There are

other jewels, more valuable, but I do not care to wear them till I am older."

"But I think, if only to please your sister, and to avoid making yourself conspicuous," I said, cautiously, for I by no means wished to pry into my pupil's secrets. "I would sometimes, on public occasions, like the concert to-morrow, wear an ornament which you did not mind showing. It does look strange always to hide your locket."

"I think you are right," said Lucy, after a serious pause; "I would not for the world attract notice. It must seem foolish," she added, blushing yet more furiously. "I have a whole drawerful of trinkets, and you and Anna shall choose for me. I do not in the least care which of them I wear to-morrow night."

I was rather surprised at the brilliance of her treasures. We selected a small diamond and enamel cross, which became her white neck; but I saw a link or two of the golden thread peeping out, and I am sure the still hidden locket hung from it.

The concert was held at a town several miles distant, and was numerously attended. My pupils looked remarkably well. Lucy had more colour than usual; but her manner was calm, even dignified, considering her low stature. Anna was in a flutter of excitement.

One gentleman, whom I did not know, was for some time in attendance on our party. When we left the concert-room he offered his arm to Miss Forsyth, and she took it without hesitation. A gentleman belonging to the neighbourhood escorted Anna and myself. He was an enthusiastic musician, and spoke only about the eminent performer to whose strains we had all been listening, enchanted. The drive home was a very silent one. I think the music still held us in thrall. I, at all events, quite forgot to ask Lucy, as I had intended, the name of her distinguished-looking cavalier.

When we alighted from the carriage I heard something fall on the stone door-step. The girls ran into the house, but I stooped down and by the light of the carriage-lamp saw some sparkling ornament which I did not recognise as belonging to any of us. I carried it up to my own room and examined it more attentively.

It was of very trifling value. Such a trinket as one schoolgirl might give to another, but the device was high-flown and sentimental. Suddenly it struck me that I held in my hand Lucy's hidden treasure.

I knew that she would grieve sorely over her loss, which she was sure to discover when she took off her dress; so I folded it in a blank sheet of paper, sealed it up, and gave it to the young ladies' maid whom I encountered in the passage, telling her to give it to Miss Forsyth, with my love. Lucy's manner at breakfast was grave, even to sadness. Very little conversation passed between us, though generally the girls talked freely about any little gaiety we enjoyed together. When I went upstairs to see their mother, Lucy and Anna, with their arms linked together, were slowly pacing the broad,

great terrace in front of the house. It appeared to me that Lucy's usually sunny brow was clouded by perplexities respecting herself.

Lady Forsyth, also, looked grave when I entered her room, but she received me with much kindness. At first we spoke about the music. The girls had given her a lively description of their evening's amusement. The large party from the Castle had quite brightened the appearance of the Town Hall.

Presently, after a pause, she said : "Lucy had a great surprise last night. I wish I had known who was staying at the Castle : I almost think I should have made an effort to accompany you. It is the first time she has been seen in public with the gentleman who will, I suppose, one day be her husband. What did you think of his countenance and manner? Anna tells me he was the most distinguished-looking man present."

"Undoubtedly," I replied, "if he was the one who led Miss Forsyth to the carriage. I have seldom, if ever, seen a handsomer man. May I inquire his name? You did not mention it when you spoke of her engagement."

"I want, first of all, to hear your real impression of him," said the mother, anxiously. "Did he look as if he really cared for my darling? There are circumstances in his past history that make me a little uneasy. His sudden admiration, too, struck me as almost suspicious, for there is nothing brilliant about either of my dear girls. They must be well known before they can be appreciated. Lucy was a mere child—not yet introduced—when they met at a house in the country where she was paying a visit to one of her schoolfellows. They sat next to each other at dinner, and I believe he made the proposal that very same evening."

"That was, certainly, rather quick wooing," I said. "What was Miss Forsyth's answer?"

"Oh, she was bewildered, carried away by his impetuosity. At first, she told me, she said 'No, no;' but he would not take her timid refusal. He became her shadow, and she was flattered and gratified by attentions which were coveted by more beautiful and gifted women. I am not sure whether she loved him, but she certainly admired and liked him. Miss Rivers, what did you think of his manner to my daughter? I do not like to say it, but my child is so richly endowed with money that it behoves me to be careful to whom I entrust the charge of her happiness."

I hesitated. Lucy's shrinking, delicate face and manner had not seemed to me likely to attract and fire the love of the handsome, princely-looking gallant I had seen with her the night before.

"I see that you are of my opinion," said Lady Forsyth, who was watching me closely. "But this affair is not without embarrassment. Lucy has given her word; and though I am not sure that she quite knows her own mind and heart as yet, she is too honourable to draw back, except on very sufficient grounds. Delay is all that has been

gained at present. That is imperative. She is much too young to marry. We must wait."

The entrance of a servant cut short the conversation. I recollected, after leaving her, that I still did not know the name of Lucy's suitor.

On returning to my room I was rather surprised to find a letter in a quite unknown handwriting, yet with the post-mark of my home; and on opening it hastily—fearing that something had happened to my only correspondent there—I was still more astonished when I read the signature.

My housekeeper had met with a slight accident. She had sprained her wrist, and Mr. Darrell, our young Vicar, had undertaken to inform me of the circumstance, and that she was in a fair way towards recovery.

"He had called to see her," he said, as in duty bound, "and found her trying to write to me, and she had gratefully accepted his offer to relieve her of this difficulty."

"Do not fear, Doña Merçedes, that your faithful servant will be neglected. Everyone is kind to her for your sake. I shall visit her daily till she is well, and I promise to tell you of her progress. You see I call you by the name which is loved and respected here, though I have addressed the letter to Miss Mercy Rivers. As I look at the envelope it seems strangely unsuitable. You are so thoroughly Spanish. I picked up a few words of your beautiful language when I was travelling in the Peninsula with my friend, our young Squire. By the way, I hear he is thinking of settling at the Hall. An opulent marriage will relieve him of past difficulties. I have ventured to write and inform him of many things here about which he ought to know—hard cases—and much that is decidedly rotten in the State of Denmark. He is good at heart, and capable of improvement. I confess I would rather have heard he was going to marry a woman of good principles and high spirits than this rich, foolish baby. She is not out of her teens. But we live and learn, as I know from experience; having, as it seems to me, lived long and learnt much since I came to this out-of-the-way corner of England."

I liked the Vicar's letter better than his conversation—almost as well as his sermons—which were always original and often eloquent. I could not help, too, laughing at the postscript: "All the dogs miss you dreadfully. I suppose I must not say their master does also. They send respectful compliments and promise not to jump upon you, if they can restrain their joy, the next time they meet you in one of our muddy lanes. Remember me to Miss Forsyth. I once had the pleasure of meeting her, and have not forgotten the occasion."

Anna came to look for me before I had finished reading my letter. I had not reached the postscript and did not convey the message. The horses waited at the door, and my companions were in their saddles when I got downstairs to accompany them.

Our ride was a longer one than usual, and took us through some

of the most beautiful scenery of the lovely West Riding of Yorkshire; the Elland Woods, the Calder River, the scene of many a bloody fray of which the girls were fond of reading, lay before us. Though we had to pass through one of the busy centres of industry, those noble trees and blossoming thickets had been respected. Close to the thriving mills one came upon knolls and crags, wooded and peaceful, where "mavis and merle were singing." The steam-whistle of the railway train did duty in places where once "the hunter's horn was ringing."

In a remoter green glade of the Elland Woods we came upon quite a cavalcade of ladies and gentlemen, among whom I recognised Lucy's cavalier of the previous evening, and I saw him draw near to her. They rode for some time side by side in conversation. No one else, while he was her attendant, approached her. I saw that, among the guests at the Castle, her secret was a secret no longer.

While I was meditating on the subject, Lucy suddenly broke off her conversation with the stranger, and called me to come nearer.

"You must let me introduce you to our dear friend, Miss Rivers," she said, simply. Then, blushing, she named her distinguished-looking cavalier, who bowed gracefully.

If an adder had stung me I could not have started more quickly. It was with the greatest difficulty that I repressed an exclamation. My discomfiture was evident. The Spanish-looking hidalgo lifted his dark, haughty head, and turned upon me a glance in which surprise was tempered by a most kindly expression. His eyes seemed to pierce me through and through.

"Miss Rivers is evidently not well," he said; promptly edging his horse with practised skill between us, and laying his hand on mine, as it held the bridle. "Take care: your horse will not stand that horrid whistle; I saw that his swerving startled you. Let me guide him past that awkward turn down to the river."

My hand trembled so much that I did not resist his attempt to control the horse, which had begun to curvet and bound at the sound of the railway signal. That firm but light pressure brought us both under control. But I could not thank my protector. No words came to my lips. I bowed silently without lifting my eyes. Lucy pressed to my side.

"Let us keep together," she said, gently. "Mr. Wolversley understands horses so perfectly. He cured my pony of shying at the white stones when we were staying at The Firs."

"Miss Rivers does not share your confidence in my powers. She looks frightened to death at me, much more frightened than when she really was in some danger," said he, laughing. "Suppose we have a canter over this strip of sward. Meeting this summer wind we shall recover our spirits."

He was right. The exhilarating breeze, the lovely woodland, our swift progress did revive me. Meanwhile, he did not cease to watch me.

"That will do," he said; and we drew in our reins simultaneously as the road began to wind up one of the steep hills of the district, and the soft turf gave way to paving stones. "Tell me," he said in a low tone, while Lucy was looking back to see how far we had outstripped the rest of the party, "what was there in the three syllables of my old Saxon name which startled you so fearfully?"

"Do not ask," I said, almost involuntarily. "It would not give you pleasure to know."

"Then I am right," he said. "It was my name that scared you, like the Highland or English Border maids, when 'a Percy' or 'a Douglas' rang on the wind. Never mind! I shall find out your secret in time. Miss Rivers believes that I am a wolf in reality, as my name denotes, but in sheep's clothing," he said gaily to Lucy. "Wolversdene, my inheritance, which I hope one day to show you, is not in the least like a wolf's den. Not that I have seen much of it," he added, shrugging his shoulders, "and the only time I passed there the old West-country Hall was transmogrified to suit the pleasure of Royalty. Even then, full of noble guests, it seemed dull enough; it wanted touches of a woman's hand to make it habitable."

I remained silent; but my heart swelled within me. I turned my head away, that he might not see the tears.

"Wolversdene!" said Lucy. "What a pretty old English name it is! The description of the place would make one love it. A merry English village with a green, and old-fashioned houses round it."

I could keep silence no longer. "It was so once; but times are changed. Forgive me, Mr. Wolversley. That sunny English village, with gabled houses clustering round the green, was my home; is so still, though I am temporarily absent. I could not bear the alteration since the dear old Squire's death. It may be dull, as you say, now; it never was so in his and my father's lifetime; not, at least, to me."

"Then you *are* Doña Merçedes—I thought so!" he exclaimed. "Vaughan Darrell described you exactly. Do not think that the old English Hall has fallen altogether into unlucky hands. The good old times may yet come back."

He looked at Lucy with a smile; but she was re-arranging a flower which threatened to fall from her riding-habit, and did not respond to his glance.

We had another canter over a breezy bit of moorland before we reached home; and the wind blew away my ill-temper. After all, as the young Vicar said in his letter, "we live and learn."

That gay young rider was not, any more than his clerical friend, as yet too old to learn, and profit by the lessons of life.

Lucy came to me in the old-fashioned terrace-garden, where I was cutting off overblown damask roses to be made into pot-pourri. I remembered that I had not given her the Vicar's message; and conveyed it nearly, if not quite, in his own words. She did not for a

moment speak; but plucked off, somewhat absently, a few of the fading roses. At last she said, in an embarrassed manner, but not in answer:

"Miss Rivers, I have never thanked you for finding my locket. It was not of any great value, but I should have been very sorry to lose it, for it reminds me of the happiest week in my life."

"When you were at The Firs, and Mr. Wolversley tamed the pony, I suppose?" I said, looking up from my employment.

Lucy blushed deeply. "No, oh no, not then; it was not Mr. Wolversley who gave it to me. It was not even a person with whom I was very intimate; I have never heard of, or seen him since, till to-day," she added. "It was Mr. Darrell, who is, you tell me, now the Vicar of Wolversdene."

"Mr. Darrell?" I exclaimed. "How came he to give you a locket? And, oh, Lucy, why do you prize it so much more than the other gifts?"

"Because it was given out of his poverty," said Lucy. "It was more to him than diamonds would be to millionaires; and it was so kindly done. No one had known that it was the eve of my birthday, but in some way it oozed out; and my friends gave me books and flowers; some of them expensive presents, but all unpremeditated. Mr. Darrell rode off in a torrent of rain, and crossed a flooded river. The next morning I found the little turquoise locket on my table. I knew it came from him though there was no written word."

The idea of Vaughan Darrell as a hero of romance was so uncongenial to my usual notions of our new Vicar, that I could scarcely help smiling; but to Lucy it was no laughing matter.

"I have put the locket away. I think my dropping it, after all my care, was ominous. I shall not wear it again. But when you see Mr. Darrell, or if you answer his letter, will you tell him that I have not forgotten his kindness, or that happy week."

"You will see him, often, yourself, dear Lucy," I said, "if your future home is to be at Wolversdene."

The blush faded, leaving Lucy deadly pale.

"Oh, I don't know; I am not sure. So mamma has told you of my first offer. Miss Rivers, do you know much of your landlord?"

"Not a great deal; only by hearsay," I said, somewhat embarrassed in my turn. "I knew his predecessor, the dear old Squire, intimately; but Mr. Wolversley has been very little at the Hall since he inherited."

"What made you shudder when you first heard his name?" asked Lucy, quickly. "You are too good a horsewoman to have been terrified by a start or a swerve. I am sure it was hearing his name suddenly that agitated you."

"Yes, I was startled; so many associations were awakened. Lucy, I would rather not say more. I may be unjust, prejudiced. There have been changes at home which grieved me, but all may be set right again there when you become the Lady of Wolversdene."

"If ever I do become the Lady of Wolversdene," said Lucy, thoughtfully. "Well, there is time to think about it yet; the engagement is only conditional; it may never be ratified."

She turned away as she spoke, and I did not wish to say more. After all, marriage might steady the young Squire, and promote the happiness of his dependents. But I did not quite like the idea of that hidden locket, now laid reluctantly aside, nor Lucy's confession that it reminded her of the happiest days of her life.

A week of excitement followed. It was the gay season in that part of the world, and we were drawn into the vortex. Flower shows, archery meetings, lawn-tennis parties were the order of the day. I had to chaperon the young ladies, and I must own that I found my duties very far from unpleasant.

The neighbours, especially the large party staying at the Castle, followed Lady Forsyth's example, and treated me with the most flattering cordiality. Whether I wished it or not, I was obliged to dance and sing, act in charades and play all sorts of games, in which I was said to excel. In short, I was young and very happy.

It was scarcely possible to retain my first unfavourable impression of Lucy's future husband; for as such, in spite of her reserve, I regarded Mr. Wolversley. He often talked to me about Wolversdene, and asked innumerable questions respecting the old Squire's management of his property. It seemed to interest him when I spoke of the deep love and respect of the tenants for their landlord. He had thought the duties he was suddenly called to perform troublesome and monotonous, he said, but they wore quite another colouring when I spoke of the ties which in the happy days of yore had bound classes together.

Many a time I tried to draw Lucy into these conversations; but she always shrank away. I knew the place and the people, she argued. Mr. Wolversley was learning to love his home from my descriptions of it: if she interfered, it would be very unbecoming and might attract notice.

I thought it only natural that Mr. Wolversley should seek to combat my, at first, inveterate prejudices. I knew that he, as well as Lucy, had seen me shudder at the sound of his name, and shrink from his approach. He did not know that when his hand closed on mine, as he pretended to soothe my steed, that his touch, firm yet gentle, controlled me more effectually than it did the horse.

From that moment I had ceased to dislike the old Squire's successor. Very soon a warmer feeling of interest for his future fate grew strong within me. I believed that in those deep dark eyes, on that broad open brow, I read the promise of better things than his gay, reckless career had hitherto led him to contemplate. He was certainly improving in steadiness, in self-control, and self-denial.

He was very gentle in his manner to Lucy. They were always sharing in our amusements, and never seemed to care to stray

away and take long tête-à-tête walks together. I supposed that the complete mutual understanding between them prevented jealousy or misinterpretation ; or else that they were quietly studying each other's character before coming to a final agreement. Lady Forsyth was especially anxious that Lucy should have time to reflect, and that matters should not be precipitated.

A larger gathering at the Castle than usual, and a ball in the evening, brought thither many friends from distant parts of the country. Among others, the Vicar of Wolversdene, who was a first-rate cricketer, received an invitation. I had, of course, answered his letter, and thanked him for his kindness to my housekeeper, who was now well again, and had told me that all the time she was laid by scarcely a day passed without his visiting her.

I dwelt lightly on Miss Forsyth's reception of his message, merely saying, as she requested, that she had not forgotten him or the pleasant time they had spent together in the Isle of Wight. I did not feel at liberty to allude to Lucy's engagement, nor did I know whether he associated her image with that of the "rich, foolish baby" who was, he had said, to bestow her hand and her wealth on his patron.

In one of the walks near the Castle I met the Vicar. Not a little to my surprise, Lucy was leaning on his arm. They separated on seeing me; but not before I had noticed that they were in close conversation.

I am sure that I looked gravely displeased; but neither of the culprits seemed much disturbed. Lucy took my arm instead of the Vicar's, and he walked by my side, telling me home news, and giving us explanations of the match which was going forward. It was soon his turn to play, so he had to go back to it.

At night the Castle and grounds were illuminated and fireworks let off in the park. A great crowd collected to see the really beautiful sight. A stream flowing over a weir was lit up still more grandly. The cascade of falling water, with a smooth expanse beyond, shone like gold under the glorious rays of the harvest moon.

The dancers in turn flocked from the mansion to enjoy the cool breeze off the water. It was like a scene in Fairyland. Now in deep shadow under the fine old trees, now irradiated with light, figures flitted to and fro, scarcely recognising each other.

I had been dancing with Mr. Wolversley, and he led me out to see the illuminations ; but I was most struck with the contrast presented by that calm, clear, glorious, golden moonlight.

"Yes, you are right," he said. "Nature is always better than art. Let us go on the bridge yonder, far away from this crowd of people, and look down the stream."

I could not resist the temptation to see what I knew was a beautiful reach of the water. The fireworks had attracted most of the sightseers to the terrace. The dark figures, backed by the strong

light in every window, stood out widely. I shivered. It looked as if the beautiful building were on fire.

"You are cold," he said; "and yet the night is sultry. "Or are you shuddering at finding yourself alone with me? Doña Merçedes, I thought—I hoped—that I had conquered some of your prejudices; that I was no longer an object of aversion?"

"No; oh, no!" I exclaimed, involuntarily. "It was only a superstitious fancy, as if someone were walking over my grave. Those people clustered at the base of the central tower look as if they were collected together to put out a conflagration."

"No, those are only feux de joie," my companion said, drawing me to the other side of the bridge. "Do not look at the people, or the rockets, or the lighted windows. They are all very well in their way, but not to be compared with the harvest moon. She is at the full to-night. Afterwards her light is never so brilliant. The waning moon is always sad, and no month in the year is like this one. No moon will ever seem to me like this. Merçedes, when we see it again next year, will it be shining upon the oaks at Wolversdene?"

"Perhaps it may, if there are any left standing," I said. I noticed that he called me by my Christian name; he spoke gravely, and his voice recalled my father's pronunciation of the word. "A good many of the grand old trees have been felled lately."

"I give you my solemn promise not another shall be touched while I am the master," he said, earnestly. "The glorious old trees may totter to their fall unmolested. Is there no atonement for the sins and follies of youth? I am a man, now. Believe me, if I could live the past years over again, they would be spent very differently."

I was touched by the gravity of his manner. "I do believe you," I said. "There is always atonement if we truly seek to amend our lives. Yours, henceforward, will be spent under happier auspices. For your own sake and for Lucy's, I trust it will be useful and prosperous."

"Do you think that marrying an heiress is a good beginning for a nobler career?" he asked, doubtfully. "To find all one's difficulties removed, without the slightest exertion of one's own, seems to me not exactly the way to bring out the finest features of a man's nature."

I was silent. All my pulses were throbbing.

"It seems to me," he went on in the same doubtful tone, "that it might be better to abjure pomps and vanities, to work hard, if one only knew what to set one's hand to—this idle right hand, which yet has strength in it."

He laid his thin, aristocratic, nervous hand on the parapet of the bridge, and looked at it disdainfully.

"There *is* work for all," I ventured to say; "but it is differently ordered. You, with your finer organs, your strong powers of mind and cultivated talents, should take thought for others who are less able to take thought for themselves."

"Will you help me to find out my allotted duties?" he said, impetuously. "Lucy is a mere child. She does not know her own mind or understand my character. I cannot learn from her. But you, Merçedes, you have taught me to know myself. Complete the work—make me what you will. My future lies in your keeping."

I drew away the hand he had taken, and left him standing alone on the bridge. I scarcely know how I reached the Castle and stole into the ball-room, like a guilty creature. My part as a chaperon that night was merely nominal. Lady Forsyth had exerted herself to accompany us, and had told me to enjoy myself. I sat down in a shaded window, striving for composure.

How could I have been so false, so faithless, to my young charge—the girl who trusted in me so implicitly? Knowing, as I did, that Mr. Wolversley was her plighted lover, how had I allowed him to love me? Could it be true that I returned his affection?"

This man whom I had so long regarded with dislike, as the disturber of the Eden of my childhood—what spell had he worked to make every pulse beat, my cheeks burn, my heart faint within me when I repulsed him? All the dreams I had indulged of being his and Lucy's friend, of our future life at Wolversdene, as near neighbours, were dispersed in a moment. I felt that between him and me seas must roll, lands part us. Henceforth I must be an exile from my home.

Just then, I heard a voice on the terrace below me say, in impassioned accents: "Lucy! my darling! Can you really make up your mind to be a poor man's wife? Do you indeed like the Vicarage better than the Hall at Wolversdene?"

The reply was spoken in a whisper; but in the silence of the moonlight night—on this part of the terrace there was solitude and shadow—I caught the tone of Lucy's voice, though I did not hear her words.

"Are you satisfied?" breathed a voice at my ear. "Must I sell my life to an heiress, when my heart is wholly thine? Merçedes, Lucy and I have long quite understood each other. She is as much in love with Vaughan Darrell as he has long been with her. Will you not take her place, and teach me, as she could never have done—though she will make my friend a charming little wife—how to bring back the old times and return to the old ways, and walk in the footsteps of the old Squire, at Wolversdene?"

Need I say what was my answer? It was given as we sat in the half darkness of the old embrasure of the window of the Castle in the West Riding, and it was ratified on the same day and in the same holy place where Lucy gave her hand to her lover.

We were to be neighbours and fast friends, and the Hall and the Vicarage at Wolversdene, were and still are our respective homes.

FAULT-FINDING.

THERE is an art of "putting things" that should be studied by everyone who desires to get through life usefully and pleasantly. How many quarrels would be avoided if we could always say with courtesy and tact any unpleasant thing that may have to be said. It is related of a good-humoured celebrity that when a man once stood before him and his friend at the theatre, completely shutting out all view of the stage, instead of asking him to sit down, or in any way giving offence, he simply said: "I beg your pardon, sir; but when you see or hear anything particularly interesting on the stage, will you please let us know, as we are entirely dependent on your kindness?" That was sufficient. With a smile, and an apology that only the art of putting things could have extracted, the gentleman took his seat.

There is a story of a separation which took place simply because a gracious announcement had been couched by a husband in ungracious terms. "My dear, here is a little present I have brought to make you good-tempered." "Sir," was the indignant reply, "do you dare to say that it is necessary to bribe me into being good-tempered? Why, I am always good-tempered: it is *your* violent temper, sir!" And so the quarrel went on to the bitter end.

At no time is this art of putting things more useful than when we have to find fault, which is a very difficult thing to do well. We all have to find fault at times, in reference to servants, children, husband or wife; but in a great number of cases the operation loses half its effect, or has no effect at all, perhaps a downright bad effect, because of the way in which it is done.

What makes it so difficult to find fault well is obvious. We have to do a thing which is almost certain to be disagreeable to the person we do it to. How is this difficulty to be overcome? The first caution that may be suggested is never to find fault when out of temper. In numberless instances reproof is rendered ineffectual, not by its severity, nor simply by its natural unwelcomeness, but by the manifest heat or irritation with which it is accompanied. It may be very hard to help it, but it is certain that, as a rule, we shall find fault in vain when we fail to keep our temper. If the temper is wrong the *time* is sure to be wrong also. Better put off till to-morrow the reproof that would be given in bad temper to-day.

There is a time *not* to find fault, and in the right perception of when that time is lies no small part of the art of managing others. Want of discrimination in finding fault is likely to be as fatal to its success as it would be fatal to the physician's treatment, were he to ignore the fitness of time and condition as an all-important element

of consideration. The reproof which has most sympathy in it will be most effectual. It understands and allows for infirmity. It was this sympathy that prompted Dr. Arnold to take such pains in studying the characters of his pupils, so that he might best adapt correction to each particular case.

We have been led to think of the bad habit of fault-finding by lately seeing a husband and wife who have acquired it and who seem inclined to make the worst instead of the best of their matrimonial bargain. "Faults are thick where love is thin;" and love having become thin some married people exaggerate the badness of their bargains. A man having one well-formed and one crooked leg, was wont to test the disposition of his friends by observing which leg they looked at first or most. Surely the last people we should draw with their worst leg foremost are our life partners. The best of men are only men at the best. They are, as Sterne said, a strange compound of contradictory qualities.

Ought husbands and wives to be ill-natured judges of what is amiss? Suppose a wife has discovered that she has married a mortal, and that the object of her ante-matrimonial affections is by no means free from infirmities of temper and character. Has she any more right to treat him with contempt than she has to condemn a man because he is consumptive and cannot lift a heavy load, or walk a long distance? She should be to moral infirmities, as well as to physical, "a little blind," remembering that the virtues upon which she prides herself may to her husband appear as innocent vices, requiring, on his part, forbearance and consideration. Complaints are unjust, unkind, and unwise. The time is past for complainings or invidious comparisons. If defects, unseen before, have arisen, she should resolve either to remedy them with diligence or to bear them with gentleness.

"Let a man," says Seneca, "consider his own vices, reflect upon his own follies, and he will see that he has the greatest reason to be angry with himself." The best advice to give husband and wife, and all who live in close intimacy, is to ask them to resolve, in the words of Shakespeare: "I will chide no breather in the world but myself, against whom I know most faults."

Thus it is, that by an impartial survey of our own characters, our disappointment in our friends may be moderated, and our love, so far from declining, may acquire additional tenderness from the consciousness that there is room for mutual forbearance. Indeed, it is often the very imperfection of human nature, rather than its perfection, that makes the strongest claims on the forbearance and sympathy of others, and, in affectionate and sensible natures, tends to produce the closest unions.

We sometimes form unreasonable expectations and make unreasonable complaints respecting people because we do not sufficiently take into consideration this truth—that all good intellectual and moral qualities cannot exist in the same character, but that precisely as we

have much of any one quality in any character, so must we look for a deficiency of some other. Instead of doing this, when disposed to condemn any one near us for a particular prevailing fault of character, we should consider if he could have been fairly expected, with his good qualities, to have been altogether free from the noxious fault.

Every creature is after his or her kind. Surliness and honesty are, for example, sometimes found together. When we find such a case and experience the benefit of the honesty, let us ascertain, before condemning the surliness, if it be not in fact an essential element of the character of the individual, which could not have been absent without the other also. Do we, again, appreciate the benign nature of someone associated with us, but feel disposed to find fault because it is attended by a want of vigour and activity; let us ask ourselves whether we could reasonably expect two good qualities so opposite to each other to be largely developed in the same person. By taking this calm, philosophic view of the faults of our friends we shall greatly increase our peace of mind.

"Grumble and get on," is a favourite maxim of John Bull; and, strange as it may seem, it is by adherence to this maxim that the British people have become the foremost in the world. The maxim must, however, be taken in the right sense; for grumbling or fault-finding, like everything else, has a good side and a bad. We may be said to see fault-finding on its right side when we see a man find fault with himself—that is, never satisfied with his exertions in any good cause, or his attainments in any laudable or generous pursuit. "Grumble against yourself and get on to high erected thoughts" and noble performances.

"Fret not thyself," is the sensible advice of the Psalmist. There are those who fret alone, whom no one can cheer, who brood over their wrongs, over things that go wrong, till their face always lives in shadow, and who claim with infinite impertinence that they are unselfish because they do not complain in words; as if their selfishness were not more hopeless than that of the open complainer. The latter, at least, gets rid of his temper in words; the other nurses it. There are others who are always forecasting evil, who allow small cares and troubles to overwhelm them with fear and hopelessness, and who drag life after them like an over-weighted cart.

Self is the shadow that darkens our lives and prevents us from being bright companions. Occupied with the thought of our own unhappiness, we cannot think, as we ought, of the welfare of others, and so we become a cloud on their sunshine. The great secret of cheerfulness is not to be absorbed in ourselves. We must be sweet and sunny, because we wish others to be happy and satisfied. Never forget that "smiling in thy brother's face is charity."

UNCLE SAM.

By G. B. Stuart.

"FRED!"

"My dear!"

"Would it bother you very much to brush my hair a little? I have such a headache—mamma used to do it—and it *is* such a relief!"

"Of course! Only I'm afraid I am such a clumsy brute I shall not do it right. However, you must tell me if I hurt you, and I'll get into the way of it directly. So—is that comfortable?"

"Delicious!"

Fred Chantry and his Evelina had been married six weeks, and had passed a month of real housekeeping at the Laurels, after a fortnight's honeymoon at Shanklin. The Laurels was a brand new villa in a suburban road, where the ruts would engulf a good sized perambulator. There was not, despite its suggestive name, a bush or tree within sight of the house; yet Evelina Chantry still declared that she liked the approach to her new home far better than the gloomy avenue which wound through her father's park; "a lot of trees about a place are so unwholesome, you know," she would say.

To-day Fred had just come home and divested himself of his coat, with a view to doing a little gardening, when his wife's plaintive appeal substituted a hair brush for the intended spade. Evelina lay on her bedroom sofa in a pretty white tea-gown, and Fred, astride a chair at the back of the couch, brushed vigorously and rythmically at her long golden locks.

"Are you better, my love?"

"Ever so much! You do it beautifully; better than mamma."

"You ought to have a maid to look after you, Evelina. I was a selfish brute to marry you on £300 a-year and bring you to a hole like this!"

"How dare you, Fred, talk of my house as a hole? As for a maid, one of my chief objects in marrying you was to escape from Dawkins—she led me such a life! Who wants a maid when they have a husband who can brush hair as you do?"

"Well, I always did say you were the pluckiest girl in the world; this last month has proved it, if I hadn't known it before. You've been up to the stores, I suppose, to-day?"

"Yes, and I got a new List, and everything is so wonderfully cheaper than we can buy it in the little pokey shops down here; I shall get everything there."

"And have you been working the sewing-machine?"

"Yes; I did half-a-dozen dusters and seven muslin blinds, and I

have almost finished hanging them—didn't you notice the top windows as you came along?"

"Hence the headache!"

"Oh, the headache's nothing—it is almost gone—I think I really only wanted to see whether you would do what I asked you still or not! We've been married more than a month, you know!"

"You darling!" Here Mr. Chantry suspended operations with the hairbrush and kissed the top of his wife's head. "All the same," he continued, "I do feel every day that I was wrong in letting you generously sacrifice yourself to a poor man like myself when your own home was so different ——"

"Fred, you couldn't help yourself—I *would* marry you."

"I couldn't help myself—that's true enough! But I ought to have managed my uncle better. I ought to have pretended to take his advice, or something, to conciliate the old curmudgeon. Who would ever have dreamed of his having the brutality to stop my allowance when I married? 'If you can afford to marry I am sure you can afford to do without my hundred a year,' he wrote to me, and I've never heard a word of him since! That hundred a year would make all the difference between ease and drudgery for you."

"Nonsense, Fred! I am sure it *is* cheaper for you married than as you lived single. Do you know old Mrs. Grabham charged you one shilling a pot for marmalade, and I can get the very best at the stores for sevenpence? Why, in marmalade alone we must save half your uncle's allowance! Besides, he's sure to come round by-and-bye; wait till he has seen me!"

"That ought to bring him to his senses if anything will," Fred admitted.

Mr. Chantry's chair commanded a side-view of the rutty suburban road and the semi-circular "sweep" in front of the Laurels.

"Good Heavens! Lina," he cried, suddenly starting up and dropping his wife's ivory-backed brushes, the glory of her trousseau: "there's a station-fly stopping at the gate and somebody bundling out! It's either your mother—or—no—bless my soul! it's my uncle!"

"Uncle Sam?" gasped Lina.

"Uncle Sam, as I'm alive! White hat, comforter, malacca cane and all! Whatever has he come for? To slang me, I suppose!"

"To look at me," said Lina, "and to make it up with you. We must make it very pleasant for him, Fred, and you see if your allowance doesn't recommence from to-morrow morning."

"Oh, dash it," sighed poor Fred. "I hate eating humble-pie to an old villain who could play his own sister's son such a dirty trick as he played me. However," dragging on his coat, "I suppose I must go down and see him. Shall I say you are coming?" as Mary tapped at the door and announced "Mr. Samuel Savage, in the drawing-room, please m'm."

"Tell him I shall be with you in a quarter of an hour, and ask him to stop to dinner, Fred."

"My love! how can we? you told me it was cold mutton day and that I must make it out with a salad. Now your salads are A1, I confess, but Uncle Sam dines every night at his club, and ——"

"Leave it to me, Fred; it will be all right."

"You know how Mary gallops round the table like a wild ass when she is excited ——"

"Go down to your uncle, sir! Do you think I am going to miss the chance of giving a dinner party and inheriting a fortune through your nervousness?"

An hour later, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Chantry were seated with their guest at the little round dinner-table, which Evelina always decorated with red glasses and bowls full of grass and ox-eye daisies. There was a railway embankment not a hundred yards from the back of the Laurels, and the prowling children who lurked on the waste land were glad to pick a lapful of daisies for a penny; so that Evelina declared she never missed the conservatory at home.

Uncle Sam had not said much beyond an intimation that he had found himself in the neighbourhood and had looked them up "to pay his respects to Mrs. Fred;" but he had grunted a good deal, and Fred, who was learned in his uncle's method of grunting, hoped the best. It was the low, satisfied grunt, not the short, sharp grunt of disapproval. Indeed, who could be otherwise than satisfied with Lina sitting beside him, her lovely hair coiled up in a coronet, her white peignoir exchanged for a simple evening dress, and her headache apparently forgotten, or at all events hidden out of sight.

"How pretty the dear girl does look with that colour in her cheeks," Fred said to himself. "Now, if only the dinner goes passably, the old skinflint will be melted, *must* be melted, and Lina shall have another servant."

Soup! ("Clever Lina! How did she manage it? No dinner is complete without soup," thought Fred.) And Lina gave a sigh of relief as she saw her lord and master, as well as his guest, swallowing with appreciation the tinned soup which she had that day brought from the stores, and with which she had had the forethought to mince a suspicion of fresh vegetables.

"Just a spoonful more, Uncle Sam; I'm afraid we have no fish coming. You know we're young housekeepers and have to be economical when we're alone, and you took us unawares to-day."

And Uncle Sam allowed himself to be entreated, and finished the tureen, remarking with relish: "Excellent soup, my dear; you seem to be a very good manager. I hope you don't keep too expensive a cook for your income?"

To this delicate insinuation Evelina answered with the most unaffected gaiety and modesty: "Expensive cook! Why, Uncle Sam, don't you know Fred found a cook and a wife in one when he married

me? You've no idea how much less he can live upon, now that I look after him." There is nothing like assuring people you are independent of them to pique them into wishing to assist you!

Mary, having removed the soup-plates with less clatter than might have been expected, now set down hot plates, and proceeded to hand round boiled rice.

"You know how to boil rice, anyway, my dear," grunted Uncle Sam, piling his plate. "We have a man at The Nepaul kept specially for it, and I declare to you, 'pon my honour, as often as not it is—*waterlogged.*"

Uncle Sam dropped his voice at this terrible disclosure exactly as if he were obliged to say something improper.

"Curry, eh? now, unless you know what you are about, you shouldn't venture on a curry; but with rice like that——" and he looked longingly at the savoury dish.

Lina stretched out her foot and gave her husband a gentle kick under the table. Fred, whose nervousness had reduced him to the lowest state of dismal silence, brightened up a little and gently kicked back.

"But I warn you," continued Uncle Sam, "there isn't an Englishwoman I've ever met with could make a curry fit to eat! Salad? yes, I'll take some salad. Any green vegetable is an improvement to a curry. Eh! you know that, do you? you seem to know a good deal for a young woman!" and Mr. Samuel Savage began to eat.

Poor Lina was pale with excitement. She knew how much hung on the event; and she only knew also that the curry was her maiden effort in cookery, and that, save for following a receipt with the materials brought that morning from the stores and the remnants of cold mutton, she knew no more of curry-making than of the black art.

A dead silence reigned for a few moments round the Chantrys' little table.

"I'll trouble you for that curry again," sounded like the voice of a reassuring angel, and Mary bounded forward with joyful, if awkward, alacrity to minister to Mr. Savage's wants. Mary adored her mistress, and, in spite of her perceptions being somewhat clouded by special injunctions to hand the vegetables on the left side and keep her thumb out of the gravy, she was aware that the most serious issues were at stake in this seemingly genial little dinner party.

Evelina looked across at Fred with a beaming face. Uncle Sam's second helping was far in excess of what his first had been, in point of size, and his relish appeared undiminished.

But what is this? he has dropped his spoon and fork, has half pushed back his chair, is wrestling wildly with the napkin tucked into his shirt-front—his eyes are starting—his throat gasping!

"Great Heavens!" cries Fred, starting up and pommelling his relative's shoulders: "the man's choking!" While Lina, dashing water into a tumbler with one hand loosens the old gentleman's

voluminous necktie, while with the other she endeavours to force a draught down his throat.

"Villain, miscreant, abandoned wretches!" shrieks Uncle Samuel in a voice choked and gasping, as he splutters with something besides rage. "You, who confess to making this filthy compound, did you think to poison an old man and inherit his money? Thank goodness this time your vile machinations have been frustrated."

And he turned his scarlet and inflamed countenance from the astonished Evelina and shook his fist in her face.

"By Jove, sir, no one shall insult my wife!" cried Fred. But Lina only said wildly:

"Keep back, Fred; this is my affair. What is it, Uncle Sam? What is it?"

"Don't 'Uncle Sam' me," Mr. Savage retorted, with a terrible calm which was even worse than rage. "What is it, indeed? what is it? Don't attempt to deny that it is yours, for you confessed to making that curry—instead of leaving it to your cook, as any real lady would have done. And besides—it matches!"

And he held up something with a trembling hand between his hostess and the light.

It was only what the cynical Dean Swift considered the most worthless thing in all the world: "Only a woman's hair!"

Presently Fred and Lina were alone, she crying quietly after the excitement of the evening, he moodily finishing his dinner off the plate of thin bread-and-butter which was to have been handed round after the luckless curry.

"It was all going on so beautifully," she sobbed. "He was quite getting to like me, and if it hadn't been for this miserable accident he would never have gone away without settling your allowance on you again. Why, oh why, did I ever think of having my hair brushed this afternoon? Fred, can you ever forgive me for bringing such disgrace upon you, for spoiling all your prospects in life?"

"My darling Lina," cried Fred, melted to even more tenderness than usual by the sight of his wife's distress, "don't think another instant about it. We are well rid of the old wretch! only I wish he had choked outright, though one of your pretty golden hairs is far too precious to do it with. Never mind, my own Lina; we will never mention his name again. I am happy to think all my prospects in life don't hang on a single hair!"

But they did, though! Old Savage bustled up to town and drove straight to his lawyer, who had rooms over his office. "I want to alter my will, Taper," said he. "I mean to leave my money to the Hospital for Diseases of the Throat, in Golden Square—ha! ha!"

"You're very excited, Mr. Savage," said the old lawyer, who was sitting over his port after dinner and did not wish to be dragged

back again to business. "I thought you were quite determined to leave your money to your poor sister's son, after all? It is not a week since we executed the will in his favour."

"He's insulted me!" spluttered Mr. Savage, gasping at the bare recital of his wrongs. "He and his wife have grossly insulted me, and they shall see that they cannot do that with impunity. Here, get a form, Taper, and let us set this right before we sleep!"

"The Hospital for Diseases of the Throat in Golden Square, I think you said?" Mr. Taper remarked, sipping his wine deliberately. "If you mean to leave your money to that, you must write to the secretary and ask for a Form of Bequest. There are so many special details and formalities attached to institutions, unless they are all complied with your relations might be able to establish a claim after all. There, sit down at my writing-table and send a line to the Secretary of the hospital."

While Mr. Samuel Savage angrily indited his few lines with an aggressive quill pen which seemed to sputter his sentiments at every stroke, Mr. Taper was reflecting: "Give him till the morning and he will have calmed down. That poor boy must not be done out of his money for some fancied offence. We must gain time a little, and Savage must cool down."

And in the morning, Savage had cooled down even more completely than kind old Taper had anticipated. For the blinds of Uncle Sam's rooms in Bury Street were closely drawn, and such friends as missed him at The Nepaul and came to ask for news of him, were informed that he had expired suddenly in the night.

"Cardiac collapse," said the doctor. "Might have occurred any moment in the last twenty years. You, Mr. Taper" (for Taper had been sent for), "had better telegraph for his relations. I shall be happy to certify to any of them that his death was not unexpected by me. I have known that he was in a most precarious state for a long while."

And Mr. Taper wisely refrained from asking whether undue excitement might have hastened the decease, though he rubbed his hands softly together, muttering: "Poor old Savage! What a mercy that I got him to write to the hospital."

Frederick Savage Chantry inherited all his uncle's savings; and Mr. Taper, whose profession makes him careful, abstained from mentioning his old client's evening visit, and the episode of the hospital. By letting fall a hint that his late friend had been interested in a hospital in Golden Square, he easily suggested to the heir that a donation of a hundred pounds would be a fitting memorial to Uncle Sam in that quarter, and the secretary was very glad to accept such a substantial "bird in the hand."

And Evelina has never made another curry!

M. L. GOW. J. SWAIN.

QUEEN ROSE.

THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1886.

MILLICENT'S FOLLY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

I.

THE day had been wet and dreary, fit emblem of its month, November; and as the evening postman splashed through the mud on his rounds in the aristocratic suburb of one of our large bustling towns, which we will call Rockham, people looked from their warm, cosy sitting-rooms, and said they would rather he had his walk than they, in the wintry weather.

He left letters at many of the houses, but not at all; and whilst he is knocking at one door, that of a well-kept, handsome house standing in a garden, let us glance into its front parlour, preceding, by a minute, the letter that will soon be there.

The family are at dinner there. Two ladies only. One, young still, and handsome, sits at the head of the table, the other, much younger, and equally well-looking, though in a different style, sits opposite to her, facing the window. Surely they cannot be mother and child! It is not only that there appears scarcely sufficient contrast in the age, but they are so totally unlike in face, form and expression; the elder all fire and pride, the younger all grace and sweetness. No, they are only stepmother and daughter.

"Make haste into the hall, Nancy," said the young lady to the servant in waiting, "there's the postman coming here."

Her accent was gay and joyful: she expected, perhaps, some pleasant news, poor girl; and the maid left the room with alacrity.

"For me?" she questioned, as the girl returned with a letter.

"Not for you, Miss Millicent," was the servant's answer. "For my mistress."

She handed the letter to Mrs. Crane, and the latter laid down the fork with which she was eating some ground-rice pudding, and took it up.

"Who is it from, mamma?"

"How can I tell, Millicent, before it is opened? It looks like

some business letter, as you may perceive. A large-sized sheet of blue paper and no envelope. It can wait. Will you take some more pudding?"

"Philip sometimes writes on those business sheets," cried Miss Crane, eagerly. "Is it his handwriting, mamma?"

"Philip! nothing but Philip! Your thoughts are for ever running upon him. I ask you about pudding and you reply with Philip! Were I Mr. Crauford Leite I should reprove you for your folly."

"No more, thank you," was the rejoinder of the younger lady, while a smile and a bright blush rose to her candid face. "Mamma, you have never appreciated Philip," she ventured to say. But the elder lady had opened her letter and was deep in its contents.

"Nancy," cried out Mrs. Crane, in a sharp, hasty tone, as she folded the letter together, in what seemed a movement of anger, "take all away. No cheese for me to-day, and Miss Millicent does not care for it. Be quick. Ring for Harriet to help you."

When they were alone, no one waited but the parlour-maid, Nancy. At other times Harriet helped her. The latter entered.

In Mrs. Crane's impatient moods she brooked no dilatory serving, and the domestics knew it. So that her wish, in this instance, was executed with all despatch, and she and her stepdaughter were left together, Millicent wondering what the unusual haste could mean.

"*I have never appreciated Philip*, you say," began Mrs. Crane, pushing her dessert plate, on which stood the finger-glass, so vehemently from before her that some of the water was spilled. "Not as you do, I am aware. I have sometimes told you, Millicent, that your exalted opinion of him, your exaggerated affection, would probably receive a check."

"I care for Philip because he has no one else to care for him, mamma," hesitated Millicent, for there was something triumphant in her stepmother's accent and words, and it terrified her.

"This letter is from his employers."

"Yes?"

"He has been robbing them, and has now decamped. They warn me to give him up to justice if he should come hiding here."

In the first shock of this terrible assertion, Millicent Crane gasped for breath, so that the impassioned denial she sought to utter would not come. For her confidence in her brother was strong, and her heart whispered to her that the accusation was not true.

"There must be some mistake," she said, recovering her agitation.

"Read the letter," returned Mrs. Crane, passing it over the table towards her: and she poured out a glass of wine for herself and took some grapes upon her plate. Millicent read, and her confidence and her hope alike died away.

When Millicent Crane had been ten and her brother eight, they were left motherless. Mr. Crane, after a short lapse of time, married again, a young wife. She did not take kindly to the two children or

they to her. They knew that their new mother disliked them in her inmost heart: for who so quick as children in detecting the feelings of those about them? To an open rupture with the children she never came; she was all suavity before their father; but her antipathy to them increased in strength, and towards Philip it grew into positive hatred. He was a generous, high-spirited, but tiresome boy, as boys are apt to be. He kept the house in commotion and the drawing-room in a litter, spinning tops on its carpet and breaking its windows with his indiarubber ball. Mrs. Crane was perpetually slipping upon marbles, while treacherous hooks and fishing-tackle were wont to entangle themselves in her skirts. She invoked no end of storms on his head, and the boy would gather his playthings together and decamp with them; but, the next day, they, or others more troublesome, would be lying about again. What provoked Mrs. Crane worse than all was, that she could not put Philip out of temper. When she attacked him with passionate anger, he replied by a laugh and a merry word, sometimes an impertinent one, for Philip was not always deferential towards his stepmother. *She* had the ear of their father, not they; and the children were put to school: which was the very best thing for all parties.

When Millicent was eighteen she was recalled home, Philip also; summoned by their father's sudden death. Nearly all the money was left to the widow for her life, and to them afterwards—and she but twelve or fourteen years older than they were! Mrs. Crane's trustees were charged to pay £50 a-year to Millicent, whose home was to be with her stepmother. To Philip also the same sum was to be paid until he succeeded to his share of the property by his stepmother's death; and to him an additional £50 yearly was bequeathed until he should be twenty-one.

Only one trustee would act, Mr. Hallett, a merchant in the town. The other trustee refused: it was an unjust will, he said, and he'd have nothing to do with it.

Philip Crane improved upon the opinion. "It is a wicked will," he cried to his sister, in a burst of indignation. "Papa must have lost his senses before he made such. It is her will, not his."

"We must make the best of it, Philip," was the gentle, soothing answer: "It is done, and there is no remedy. You shall have my £50 as well as your own. I shall not want it."

"Don't talk nonsense, Millicent," returned the boy. "You'll want your £50 for clothes and pocket-money: that deceitful old crocodile will not furnish them? And if she did, do you think I would take the paltry pittance from you?"

The worst aspect of the affair was, that no money had been specially left to place Philip forward in the world. He said he would go to sea; but Millicent cried and sobbed and entreated that he would not, for she possessed that dread of a sea-life indigenous in many women, and Philip, who loved her dearly, yielded to her.

Then he said he would go into the army; but where was his commission to come from? Mrs. Crane declined to furnish funds for it, and despatched him back to school for a year.

At seventeen, Mr. Hallett, whose influence Mrs. Crane had completely gained, obtained for Philip an admission into a London banking-house. His salary for a time would be almost nominal; but he had his hundred pounds a-year. Quite enough to keep him in every way, pronounced Mrs. Crane. Yes, perhaps so, when a young man has the moral strength to resist expensive temptations, but very little to encounter those which bubble up in the vortex of a London life. From five o'clock in the evening, when he left business, Philip Crane was his own master, *without a home*, save his solitary lodgings, and without relatives. Friends (as they are so called) he made for himself, but they were friends he had better have been without; for they were mostly young men of expensive habits and of means superior to his. As the years went on, debt came; embarrassment came; despair came; and, in an evil hour, it was on his twenty-second birthday, Philip Crane took what did not belong to him, and detection followed. Hence the letter sent to Mrs. Crane by the firm, in which they gave vent to the fulness of their indignation.

Millicent sat with her eyes concentrated on the letter; and a slow conviction of its truth came to her. "Oh, Philip! Philip!" she wailed forth, "anything but this! I would have worked to save you from dishonour—I would have died to save you from crime. Mrs. Crane! mamma! what he has taken must be instantly replaced."

"Not by me," was the harsh reply. "You will never find me offering a premium for theft."

"But mamma, it is so *small* a sum! Only fifty pounds."

"Had it been but fifty shillings the crime would be the same. Besides, any attempt of that kind would be the compounding of a felony. I am surprised at you, Millicent. Philip richly deserves punishment, and I trust he will meet it. If he attempt to come here, I shall assuredly give him up to justice."

Millicent did not answer, did not remonstrate, but sat with her head bowed in her clasped hands. She wore an evening dress of lilac silk, a little falling lace on its low body and short sleeves, which was the fashion for young ladies of that day, and she looked very young in it. Her face was a sweet and delicate face, her soft-brown eyes were charming. Suddenly a knock at the hall-door was heard.

"Mamma," she exclaimed, "that is Richard's knock! He must be told of this. Oh, how shall I tell him? Perhaps he will give me up!"

"I will tell him for you, Millicent."

"Yes, yes; I will go upstairs. You will soften it to him as much as you can, mamma, won't you?" she added, imploringly.

"*Soften* it!" repeated Mrs. Crane. "How is that to be done?" And Millicent groaned as she escaped.

How many phases of thought pass through the mind in an instant

of time! Before the servant entered to say Mr. Richard Leite was in the drawing-room, Mrs. Crane had run over the matter with herself and taken her resolution. She would *not* tell Richard Leite. He was to be married to Millicent in the spring. She desired the marriage for more than one reason, and she certainly would not give information of any kind which might tend to frustrate it.

Richard Leite was standing by the fire when she entered the drawing-room. He was a tall, stately man, with a proud, fair face, and quiet, pleasing manners, his age a year or two under thirty. Rockham said how fortunate Millicent Crane was to have been chosen by him. It was a desirable match for her in every way. The Crauford Leites, merchants and ship-owners, were of a high standing in the town, second to none, and Richard's character was unblemished.

He sat with Mrs. Crane the whole evening, and took tea with her. Mrs. Crane told him Millicent was not well, and had, she believed, retired to rest. When he left the house, the girl came shivering into the drawing-room and crept close to the fire, for she was very cold.

"Mamma, how is it? What does he say?"

"Millicent," said the elder lady, turning away her face, which was blushing hotly for her untruth, to tell which was not one of Mrs. Crane's frequent faults, "it will make no difference in Mr. Crauford Leite's intentions." She was much addicted to give the two names; nobody else did. "He must feel the degradation Philip has brought, feel it keenly, but he will not visit it on you—upon one condition."

"What condition is it?" asked Millicent.

"That you never speak of your brother to him; that you never, directly or indirectly, allude to him in his presence; and should Richard Leite, in a moment of forgetfulness, mention Philip's name before you, that you will not notice it, but turn the conversation to another subject."

"And is this restriction to continue after our marriage?"

"I know nothing about that. When people are married they soon find out what matters they may, or may not, enter upon with each other. It is enough, Millicent, that you observe it for the present. Can you and will you undertake to do it?"

Mrs. Crane's voice bore quite a solemn tone; Millicent's caught it, and she answered in the same spirit:

"I will, I promise; it is no difficult restriction. What could I have to say about Philip *now?*"

The weeks went on, several; and, with them, the preparations for Millicent's marriage. For once—rare occurrence!—it was a union of love; and her happiness would have heen unclouded but for the agitating suspense about her brother. Nothing more had been heard of him. His hiding-place had not been traced, but it was the opinion of the banking-firm that he had escaped to America. And there they quietly suffered him to remain, and let the search drop. Millicent's

days were anxious and her nights weary: she loved this poor brother with a lively, enduring love; she pictured him wandering the earth, homeless, friendless, destitute, overwhelmed with remorse and contrition. Before Mr. Leite alone she strove to appear cheerful and happy, not wishing him, after his restriction, to think she dwelt too much on this erring brother. He had never mentioned the subject to her in any way, and she felt thankful for it.

One day, early in February, she was walking unaccompanied in the busy part of the town, when a man in the garb of a sailor, wearing a large, shabby pilot jacket, and with a good deal of dark hair about his face, stepped up to her and put a note into her hand without speaking, touched his hat, and disappeared down a side street. Millicent, much surprised, stared after the man, and opened it.

"My dear Sister,—Come to me this evening at dusk, if you can do so without suspicion at home. I have been on the watch for days, hoping to get sight of you. Be very cautious: the police are no doubt on the look-out for me here, as they have been in London. I am at 24, Port Street; the house is mean and low, and you must come up the stairs to the top story and enter the door on your right hand. Will you dare this for my sake? P. C."

Millicent had unconsciously stood still while she read the note, and her face was turning as white as death. So intent was she as not to perceive Richard Leite, who happened, by ill luck, to be passing. He crossed the street and touched her on the shoulder; and Millicent, whose head was full of officers of justice looking after Philip, positively screamed in alarm as she crumpled the note up in her hand and thrust it into her bosom.

"What is the matter?" cried Mr. Leite, in astonishment.

"I thought—I—Is it only you?" stammered Millicent.

"Only me! What has happened, Millicent, to drive away your colour? What is that letter you have just hidden with so much terror.

"The letter's nothing," she gasped, her teeth chattering with fright.

"It must be something," persisted Mr. Leite, gazing at her. "I saw a sailor-fellow come up and give it you. Very strange!"

"Indeed it is nothing. Nothing that I can tell you of."

"Do you want to make me jealous, Millicent?"

"I will tell you all about it some time," she said, endeavouring to assume a careless, playful tone. "I promise it, Richard."

He left her as she spoke, for he was in pursuit of hasty business, but as he walked on he pondered over what he had seen and Millicent's agitation, and repeated to himself that it was "very strange."

Evening came; and Millicent, attired in a plain dark winter cloak with a close black bonnet, and making an excuse to Mrs. Crane that she was going to spend an hour with some friends who lived near, started forth to meet her brother. She knew perfectly well the locality of Port Street, but never remembered to have been in it; for though

not what might be considered a decidedly disreputable street, it was tenanted by the very poor, and partly let out in low lodging-houses. As she turned rapidly into it, she saw by the light of the dim evening that it was a narrow, dirty street; men were standing about it, smoking short pipes, a sprinkling of them sailors, for it led direct to the ships in the basin; and untidy women shrieking out to their children with loud, angry tongues. Millicent drew her black veil tighter over her face as she peered out for No. 24.

To turn into the house and up the two flights of stairs was the work of a moment. Peeping out of the door indicated, and holding a light in his hand, was the same man who had given her the note. He retreated into the room before Millicent, and held the door open for her. She stood in hesitation.

"Millicent, don't you know me?" he whispered, pulling her in and shutting the door behind her. And whilst she was thinking it could not be Philip, she saw that it was. For one single instant he took off the dark curls, like a sailor's, and the false hair on his face; and his own auburn hair, his fair face, with its open, gay expression, appeared to view.

"Oh, Philip! Philip!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears, "that it should come to this!"

He told her all. How the temptations of his London life had overwhelmed him, its embarrassments had drowned his reason and his honour, and, in a fatal moment of despair, he had taken a bank-note which he could not replace. Not for an hour since had he known peace; and, but for the disgrace to *her* of having her only brother at the felon's bar, he should have given himself up to justice. He had been in hiding ever since, in poverty, and was now in scanty clothing, for his clothes, what few he brought with him when he took flight, had gone, article after article, to procure food. He had made up his mind to leave the country for Australia, the land of gold as it was deemed then, if Millicent could help him with the passage-money, the lowest amount that the lowest passenger could be conveyed for, and clothe him with a few necessaries for the voyage.

"I would not ask it, Millicent," he said, "for I do not deserve help from you; I would not, on my word of honour, but that that country holds out a hope of getting on; and for your sake, as well as my own, I would endeavour to redeem the past and atone for it, for I well know the severe trial this has been to you. Large fortunes are being made there; and it may be that in time —in time, Millicent—you may be able to acknowledge me for a brother again. Should this luck not be mine, I can at least there work honestly for the bread I eat; work and rough it—and I have had enough of crime. Here work is denied me, for I dare not show myself in the face of day."

Millicent, good, forgiving, and full of love, promised all he wished. She had not the money at command, her marriage preparations had more than absorbed it; but she knew she could borrow it from one or another.

"I will come here again to-morrow evening, Philip," she said, "and bring what I can with me that you may be getting some clothes together. I will get it you all in a few days. Is—is there nowhere else that we could meet instead of here?"

"Of course there's not," he answered. "It will not do for us to be seen meeting in the street, lest any officer on the look-out for me should catch the scent. Nothing will harm you here, my darling sister. If the house is poor, it is honest."

"No, no, there's nothing to harm me," she pleasantly acquiesced. "I will be here again to-morrow night, Philip."

The next evening, circumstances seemed to favour Millicent. She was invited to take tea at a friend's house, and nothing would be easier, she thought, than to go out ostensibly to pay the visit and run first to Philip. So she attired herself in the same dark cloak and bonnet, and, when ready, went to say adieu to Mrs. Crane.

"You are going very early!" exclaimed the latter. "And what a dowdy you have made of yourself, Millicent! I thought that old coal-scuttle of a bonnet was discarded."

"It is raining fast, mamma."

"Is it? I hope you have got your dress up. Where's Nancy?"

They went out together, Miss Crane and Nancy. Soon Millicent dismissed the latter, saying she wished to proceed alone, but that Nancy need not mention this to her mistress. The girl promised: she was pleased to have an hour for herself, and went gossiping off to some of her acquaintance; and she only thought her young lady was going to steal a walk with Mr. Richard Leite.

Millicent walked swiftly, heedless of the dirt and the rain. It was a windy night, and as she was turning the corner of the alley which led from the broad, lighted street to Port Street, her umbrella, a light one, turned inside out. So Millicent had to make a stand there and battle with the cross-grained article.

On the other side of the wide, open street, picking his way that he might not soil his evening boots, was advancing a gentleman, likewise under cover of an umbrella. He glanced at the figure opposite, struggling and fighting with hers, and a smile at her efforts came to his eyes and his lips: but it was speedily superseded by astonishment, for as she threw her face upwards, in the contest with this obstinate umbrella, the rays of a street gas-lamp fell on it, and disclosed to Richard Leite, for he it was, his own betrothed wife.

Millicent and the umbrella disappeared down the alley, and Mr. Leite, after a short mental debate, strode after her. He traced her into Port Street, and he saw her enter the house No. 24. Richard Leite, his senses all topsy-turvey with wonder and perplexity, took his standing within an entry opposite and watched.

It was half an hour before she came out, and she went quickly up the street in the rain, without putting up her umbrella, fearful perhaps of another collision with the wind. Mr. Leite came from his

hiding-place, and kept her in view till she was knocking, heated and out of breath, at the house of their friends, where he had likewise an invitation. He went up, as she stood there waiting for admission, but he said nothing of what he had seen, not a word: he had resolved to watch her future movements and pursue the matter up. But he was pointedly cool to Millicent; and did not see her home in the evening, leaving her to Nancy. He was a proud, vain man; and to have any doubt or suspicion cast upon his future wife was to his spirit bitter as wormwood. And yet to doubt Millicent Crane!—open, honourable, right-minded Millicent Crane! Richard Leite was sorely perplexed as he lay on his sleepless bed that night.

Several days elapsed before Millicent got together the necessary money for her brother, borrowing, in secret, a few pounds from one friend and a few pounds from another; for Mrs. Crane she did not dare to ask or confide in, and nearly every evening she contrived to see him. But never did she enter that low street and its No. 24 but she was watched by Richard Leite. He had made inquiries. A handsome young sailor, just come off a voyage, was lodging in the house, and the young woman came to see him. Richard Leite could not fathom it, but his heart waxed wroth against Millicent.

One evening, when the time of Philip's departure was drawing near, as Millicent was returning through Port Street, from one of these stolen visits, she heard a haughty stride behind her, and the voice of one she well knew.

"Millicent! Miss Crane!"

She was obliged to turn, shaking all over with apprehension, and debating how she could account for her appearance in such a locality.

"What have you been doing here?" asked Mr. Leite. "Tell me."

"I—Richard—it was an errand. It is done now, and I am going home."

"You can have no legitimate errand in this part of the town," he retorted, "and your visits here, of late, have been pretty frequent. Will you impart to me the cause of this, Millicent?"

"Richard," she cried, with tears of agitation, "you have known me for years; you have chosen me for your wife; you cannot suspect me of anything wrong?"

"My wife, yes. I did choose you. But do you think a wife, actual or promised, should hold a disgraceful secret and keep it from her husband?"

"I trust—Richard—when I am your wife—that we shall have no concealments from each other," she panted forth. "I will not from you."

"Will you tell me what brings you to this place of an evening, and who it is you come to visit?"

"Later, I will tell you—if you will allow me," she answered. "I may not now."

"What do you call 'later?' When we are married?"

"Yes."

"And not before?"

"You would not hear me, Richard," she returned, her mind reverting to his interdiction, "and perhaps not forgive me."

"You must think my confidence in you will stretch to any limit," he haughtily rejoined. "A man does not usually marry with doubt on his mind. I must know what this mystery is, and without subterfuge."

"I may not tell you now," she answered, in a deprecating tone; "I do not know what the consequences would be:" meaning, of course, the consequences to Philip. "I will ask permission."

"Of your sailor friend at No. 24?" he returned, his lip curling with ineffable scorn; and she could not suppress a cry of terror.

"Oh, Richard, don't ask me; don't try to fathom this! On my word of honour, as your future wife, I am doing nothing wrong; nothing disgraceful; nothing of which I need be ashamed."

"If you wish me to believe this, you must tell me what it is, and let me judge what you call 'disgraceful.'"

"Indeed I cannot to-night. But—perhaps to-morrow night—I will try. I will if I can."

"Very well," he replied; "I will afford you the opportunity to-morrow night." And he continued to walk by Millicent's side in stern silence till she reached her home.

"You will come in," she said to him when the door was opened.

"No. Good-night to you," he answered, and turned and strode away. It seemed as if he had but constrained himself to walk with her for her protection.

The next night, when Millicent saw her brother, she asked if she might impart the secret to Richard Leite.

"You could not betray it to anybody worse, lover of yours though he is," was Philip's rejoinder. "He is one of your cold, upright men, Millicent, who force every consideration to give place to honour. He would deem it derogatory to the high mercantile character of their house not to deliver me up to justice if he knew I was here: and old Leite is a public man, you know, and puts M.P. to his name. When I am quite gone, I and the good ship which will bear me out of danger, then tell him."

"That may not be for a week or more."

"Oh, yes, it will. But, Millicent, if you think the delay will cause serious unpleasantness between you and Richard Leite, tell him at once. I will risk it. And better that a worthless vagabond, as I have proved myself, should be sacrificed, than your peace endangered."

Millicent's heart sank within her, but she felt that her duty to her unfortunate brother must stand first. She believed that Richard must suspect the mystery had reference to Philip, though he would not hint at such in his high and haughty spirit.

He sought her that evening. He had watched her to the old haunt,

and he watched her out again ; then he strode after her and allowed himself to overtake her in a quiet part of the road, when the busy streets were left behind them.

"I said I would afford you an opportunity of speaking to me to-night," he began, without any previous salutation, and in a cold, severe tone. "I am here to do it."

"And I cannot speak yet, Richard. You must accord me a little while longer ; a few days."

"Not a day, not another hour," he burst forth. "If we part to-night without full confidence between us, we part for the last time."

"Richard," she uttered, clasping her hands together and laying them on his arm in her agitation, "do not be so harsh with me ; do not be so cruel ! I assure you, I assert it in the hearing of Heaven, that my going, as I have done to that house in Port Street, is no just cause for your breaking with me. You taught me to love you, Richard : if you desert me, you remove all I now have to live for."

"Fine words, flowery sentiments," he rejoined, "but they possess more sophistry than reason. I do not desert you, or have wished to do so ; I ask but for your confidence, Millicent. If you will not give it me, you drive me from you."

"I will give it you, Richard—after a little while. I would give much to be able to give it you now."

"What prevents you ?"

"Have confidence in me," she implored, evading his question ; accord me yet a few days' delay. Do not see me before then, if you would rather not. But cherish no harshness against me, for I do not deserve it."

"I am not a simpleton, Millicent," he bitterly said. "You ask to be freed from my company that you may pursue these degrading visits : it is impossible that they can be for any good. And it is equally impossible that you can be called upon to indulge in any line of conduct which may not be told to your future husband. I think a species of madness must have overtaken you."

"Sorrow has overtaken me," she murmured, "nothing else. Can you not understand, Richard ? There is a secret in this matter which is not mine."

"What if I promise to keep it ? Anything entrusted to you may be entrusted to me."

"*May* I trust him," she asked herself, "with safety to Philip ?"

"If it—involved criminality ?" she hesitated, looking at him, and speaking timidly. "Criminality in another," she hastily added, "not in me. Would you promise to keep it then ?"

"I am not in the habit of being made the confidant of crime," he imperiously rejoined. "I did not know that you were."

And Millicent saw that her momentary hope of telling him then was at an end ; she felt assured that after that hint of "crime" it was not possible he could fail to know the trouble related to Philip. She

stood, looking the image of perplexed despair, her cheeks pale, her sad, sweet eyes cast down. Mr. Leite may be forgiven for mistaking the signs for those of deceit and guilt.

"Then you refuse to tell me, Millicent Crane?" he resumed.

"For the present. I have no other resource. Indeed I will tell you later."

"No," he said, "I shall never give you another opportunity. If we part now, we part for ever."

"Oh, Richard, you cannot mean it!" she wailed, her voice faint with emotion. "Surely you will not cast me off—and we so near the time of being man and wife!"

"I will send you your letters back to-morrow," he coldly rejoined; "and I shall be glad if you will return me mine. Adieu. Your path in life now lies one way and mine another."

"But it must not be," she said, with a gasping sob, clasping his arm in her anguish. "I am to be your wife, Richard; you have said it."

"Yes," he answered, remaining quite still, and not seeking to push her hand away. "If you will explain your conduct, and I find you have done nothing unworthy the future wife of an honourable man. Can't you do this, Millicent?" he added, his tone almost as despairing as hers.

She pressed both her hands upon her throbbing temples, and again debated the question with herself. Her brother's safety on the one side; her own happiness and the good opinion of Richard Leite on the other: should she risk the former for the latter? Mr. Leite watched her countenance and its signs of despair.

Slowly she removed her hands and raised her eyes to his, and essayed twice to speak before she could get out the words.

"Were appearances against you, Richard, and you bid me *wait* and *trust* you, I would wait for any length of time; I would wait and trust you for years, if you so wished it. *I* only ask for a few days."

"Then you decline to explain. That is your final answer?"

"It is so; against my will. It is obliged to be."

"Farewell to you," he rejoined, with stern sadness. "From henceforth, Millicent, we are strangers."

He strode away rapidly in the direction of his home—the handsome new home he had prepared for Millicent and taken possession of; and she turned towards hers with a bursting heart. She thought him more harsh than he ought to be—for never a doubt crossed her that he must well know the impediment was Philip.

Two days after that, Philip left the town for another port, to join an emigrant ship bound for Melbourne. He did not dare embark from Rockham. But, what with one delay and another, ten days elapsed before Millicent received the news that he had actually sailed. She then wrote the following note to Richard Leite:

"The time is now come when I am released from my obligation

of secrecy. Give me an opportunity of clearing myself to you, whatever you may then decide as to our future. I am ill and unhappy: do not continue to cherish resentment against me.

"MILLICENT CRANE."

To which the following answer came:

"DEAR MISS CRANE,—When my son left for New York (for which port he sailed three days since, with the view of transacting business for our firm) he empowered me to open any letters that might come for him. Hence your note has fallen into my hands, and, as it is not upon business matters, I take the liberty of returning it to you. I expect Richard will be home in about three months; but, if you wish, I will give you his address in New York. Will you forgive my saying that I sincerely regretted the rupture which my son informed me took place between you and himself (the nature of which he did not impart to me), for I know no young lady whom I would rather have seen his wife.—Believe me, my dear Miss Crane, Your ever sincere friend.

"THOMAS CRAUFORD LEITE."

Illness set in. The daily fever, dread, suspense once at rest, the frame had leisure to assert itself, and Millicent became dangerously ill. A slight attack of brain fever subsided into low fever, and she was brought to the brink of the grave. After many weeks, she partially recovered, and was ordered away for change of air and scene. Some relatives of her own mother's, living at the seaside, received her. With them she stayed the summer, and recovered her bodily health. But not her spirits: for the non-return and the silence of Richard Leite affected her much. Autumn came in, and then she proceeded home.

It was a warm, bright day, the one chosen for her journey. She had to travel alone, her friends seeing her safely to the train in the morning, and into a first-class carriage. "Mind you don't get flirting and run away, Millicent, now you are to be left to yourself for three or four hours," one of them, young like herself, laughingly observed; and Millicent laughed a response, in the same joking spirit: a hollow laugh, though, she felt it to be in her own heart. *She* flirt and run away!

When the train arrived at a certain junction on its route, the passengers were informed that they must there alight to wait for a branch train; so they crowded, grumblingly, into the waiting-rooms. Millicent, however, made her way to a seat she espied beyond the platform, a rude bench, placed underneath a bank; and here she sat, enjoying the fine fresh air of the autumn day, and occasionally reading. The near approach of a gentleman, an impatient fellow-passenger, who was strolling about, caused her to look up.

A sudden shock fell over her: she knew not what she did. The book was hastily dropped upon the bench, and she, trembling all over, took a step forward. For it was Richard Leite.

"Richard!" she exclaimed, holding out her hand, "is it really you?"

He met the hand quietly and calmly; his voice, as he answered, was cold and proud.

"You have returned from America, then?" she said.

"Yes. I landed yesterday, and am on my way now to Rockham. You look ill, Miss Crane."

"I have been very ill since you left," she murmured, "and have been by the sea all the summer for change of air. I am well now."

They stood facing each other in silence, as if neither knew what to talk about. Ah, how noble and good he looked, his fair and attractive face slightly bent, his steadfast grey-blue eyes fixed on hers. He began to say a few formal words of adieu, about to turn away.

"Oh, but, Richard, you must hear me," she exclaimed, a terror coming over her lest they were to part again for an indefinite period without an explanation. "Let me explain now. I have not yet had the opportunity of justifying myself to you."

"I would rather not hear any justification," he interrupted, the deep agitated flush which had arisen to his face fading away. "Let the past be buried in silence. It is of no consequence now."

"But I *must* tell you," she feverishly rejoined: "I cannot let you go through life suspecting and blaming me. Were you not aware who it was I went to see in that wretched street? I thought—knowing what you did know—that you must have suspected him at the time; and that was the cause of my terror."

"You are talking riddles to me," said Mr. Leite, after a pause, made, as it seemed, to take in the sense of her words. "But I have no wish, and now no right, to hear your private affairs. It is too late."

"Oh, yes, yes," she pleaded, in great distress. "I am not alluding to—to the relations that existed between ourselves; I only ask to be justified. That sailor was my brother."

"Your brother, Millicent!" he ejaculated, staring at her.

"Yes," she said, bursting into tears of miserable agitation. "He had disguised himself as you saw—if you did see him—in those wide, rough clothes, and the dark curls and whiskers."

"Sit down," he said, gently pushing her on the bench again and sitting down beside her, fully aroused now from his displayed cold indifference. "Do you mean your brother Philip?"

"I have no other brother, Richard. He had been in concealment ever since that dreadful affair in London, reduced to great straits, and had come down to ask my help to ship himself off to Australia. Whilst he was hiding in that room in Port Street, I was engaged collecting together sufficient money for some clothes and his passage, lowest class. You will say, perhaps, that I ought not to have visited him: but he had no other friend in the world to whom to cling in his distress, and Mrs. Crane had avowed her intention of giving him up to the law if she got the chance. I believed that my duty—as my love—lay in going to see and comfort him."

"But, Millicent—though there is much that I do not yet understand—why did you not confide this to me?"

"First of all, your own prohibition, and secondly ——"

"What prohibition?" interrupted Mr. Leite. "What are you talking of?"

Thinking his memory extraordinarily oblivious, Millicent related what passed the night they first received news of Philip's guilt. She repeated the very words used by Mrs. Crane. He listened with growing interest.

"Mrs. Crane purposely deceived you!" he returned. "She never mentioned the subject to me. I assure you, Millicent, that, until this moment, I did not know but that your brother was still in his situation in London."

"Then what must you have thought of me?—of my stolen visits to that undesirable street and that strange sailor?"

"No matter, now, what I thought. You were deeply to blame, Millicent; you ought not to have used deceit to me."

"Oh, Richard, if I might have told you! You do not know how I longed to tell: though I believed throughout that you could not fail to suspect the truth. And Philip feared that you, all probity and honour, might deem it your duty to have him taken up. Would you have done so, Richard?"

"No," said Mr Leite beginning quietly: "how can you ask it, Millicent?" he added, in rising passion. "Was he not your brother? I would have helped him away more effectually than you could do. What folly it has been!"

"That day, when you came up, as I was reading the note in the street, which he, in his disguise, had just put into my hands, I should have told you all, Richard, for I was greatly in need of an adviser, but for the prohibition so falsely imposed on me by Mrs. Crane."

"Mrs. Crane has much to answer for," he returned, a strange expression of bitter regret on his quivering lips. "She has parted us for ever."

"You do not—you will never think well of me again?" she faltered.

"Yes, I shall. I shall think of you again, and always, as the best woman who has ever crossed my path in life, and who was, and might still have been, the dearest. It is your own mistaken folly that has parted us, Millicent."

"Might still have been the dearest," she murmured. "Then I am not, Richard?"

"You must not be," he said, in bitter sadness. "I am a married man."

Millicent half rose, sat down again, and bent her face on the arm of the bench. She felt the colour forsake her parted lips, and her frame began to shake as if she had the ague.

"I thought you were irrevocably lost to me," proceeded Mr. Leite,

"and my feelings towards you were a compound of rage and bitterness; yet I loved you passionately all the time. In New York I met a young lady, the daughter of one of our correspondents there, who took my fancy—not my heart, Millicent: that had died out with you—or I told myself it had. Partly in the indulgence of my admiration, partly to gratify the exasperation I felt towards you, I married her, and have brought her home—to the home that was to have been yours. She is with me here to-day."

Millicent stood up again. She strove for calmness, though she knew that life's sunshine was gone from her for ever. The bell was ringing for the passengers to take their places, and she offered her hand, in farewell, to Richard Leite.

"Am I justified in your heart?" she asked.

"Yes. Better, though, for that heart, that you had not been, for it has brought back regrets which will never pass away. God bless you, Millicent," he whispered, as he wrung her hand in both his—"God bless you, *my dearest*, and render your future destiny a happy one—happier than mine will be! Oh, child, how different life might have been for us both but for your folly!"

He hastened to the platform, and Millicent slowly followed. She saw him bring out a lady, young and very handsome, from the waiting-room, place her in a carriage, and follow her into it. Millicent found her way to another. As the train moved slowly onwards, Millicent saw her book lying on the bench. She had forgotten it, so it was lost. Lost? what mattered that, or any other loss, to a heart, sick as hers was, with its excess of anguish?

"He is right," she told herself. "I ought to have known him better. Nothing has parted us but my own folly."

II.

Smoothly and swiftly the great steamer glided through the waters. A noble vessel she was, yielding the palm to none she met or passed on the broad Atlantic. A handsome, well-built American clipper, bearing a full freight, both of passengers and cargo, from the port of Liverpool to her own shores. The hour was evening, and the vault of heaven—where do we see it, in its full expanse of majesty, as on the broad, wide seas?—was studded with constellations. Brighter shone the stars than they seem to do on land.

In a remote corner of the deck, where few could see or hear her, was one of the passengers. Pleasant sounds, as of music and dancing, came from afar, yet she remained there alone. Her hands clasped the outer railing of the deck and her head rested sideways on them, as she looked out to sea with a dreamy, abstracted gaze. There was something in the gaze and in the attitude which told of deep sorrow. Her years may have numbered thirty, and her countenance was gentle and pleasant to look upon, notwithstanding its expression of anxious care.

"How long! how long!" she murmured, lifting her head as if in sudden pain, and pressing her hands together. "Oh, my merciful God, thou knowest how long it is, and the remembrance never leaves me!"

The words seemed to be wrung from her by a crushing weight of anguish. Yet the sacred appeal was not spoken in lightness, but reverently, as one would utter a prayer.

She, Millicent Crane, was reviewing her past life. Six years have gone by since we met her. It had been to her not as the calm waters they were now sailing on, but as a sea of trouble, each wave buffeting more ruthlessly than its predecessor. Its many miseries rose before her as in a mirror, one succeeding to another. The troubles of early childhood brought by the cruel stepmother, and the disasters of later life. There came one green spot in Millicent's existence, the love of Richard Leite, when the whole world seemed full of golden sunshine.

The sunshine came to an end. They parted through misapprehension. In a later interview, when things were cleared, Richard Leite, married then, had bowed his head over her in remorse, as a few words of anguish escaped his lips—that *she* was still his first and only love. "My cup of sorrow is full," Millicent had wailed forth, as she returned that day to her desolate home.

Her cup of sorrow was *not* full: and the world's cares, real cares, were then about to fall upon her in earnest. Her sorrows had been those of the heart: the hardly less bitter ones of poverty and loss were soon to be added to them. Mrs. Crane had married the trustee of the Crane property, John Hallett; he used it to speculate with (with, it must be said, her partial connivance), and lost it nearly all. It was now Mr. Hallett's turn to flee from justice, and he left his wife in bitter disgrace and poverty.

Millicent went out as governess, sharing the fate of many others; she had not been trained for one, and in that respect was not perhaps very eligible. Tossed about from pillar to post, now in a situation, now without one, now with a considerate family, now with those who treated her less well than they did their servants, she had lived on; doing her best in all ways conscientiously, and sending a five-pound note to her stepmother when she had one to send. She had now entered upon a new situation with an American family, the Patricksons, who were going home to New York. Hence her presence on board the steamer that night.

"I say, Bill," called out a sailor, who in pursuance of his occupation had come close to Millicent, "look yonder at them clouds a-rising. If we don't get a storm to-morrow, I'm a Dutchman."

"Let it come," growled the man addressed. "Calm one day, storm the next. It's the way o' this life."

"Not for me," murmured Millicent, as the words caught her ear. "Mine has been all storm. What is there left for me in it? Nothing, nothing, but my hope of a better."

One great trouble on her mind was her brother Philip. He was still in Australia and had long ago refunded to the London bank, with interest, the money he had taken from it; and had also sent money for other debts in London, trifling ones. But he did not seem to be getting on much, so far as Millicent was able to judge; for a long while now she had not heard from him at all. But while the Crane family had gone down in the world, the Crauford Leites had gone up. Old Mr. Leite, who had been in Parliament for some years, one of our noted public men, was knighted about the time of his son's marriage; later on, he was made a baronet. Of Richard, Millicent knew nothing, except that he still lived at Rockham as of old, with his wife.

The steamer arrived in due course at its destination and discharged its passengers on the American shores. Millicent found she did not like New York. Neither did she like her situation. Indeed it was *that* she disliked, not the place itself. The mode of living at a boarding-house, for the Patricksons had taken up their abode at one, appeared to be confused and uncomfortable. Her charges, five in number, two of them boys, were indulged, turbulent children, and Millicent could not often control them. They set her at defiance.

"You have not sufficient energy, Miss Crane," Mrs. Patrickson said to her one day.

"Indeed I think I exert a great deal," answered Millicent; "at least, as much as I am allowed to. Pardon me for saying that when you are present you do not second my efforts to exact obedience. No matter how rebellious the children may be, you do not correct them yourself, or appear to approve of my endeavours to correct them."

"Oh, yes, I approve," said Mrs. Patrickson, languidly, swaying herself in a rocking chair and sucking candy.

"Then, would it not be better if you allowed the children to see you do?" asked Millicent, courteously. "If you spoke but a single word to let them understand that I am to be obeyed, it might make a difference."

"I fear you won't get along in my place at all," observed Mrs. Patrickson, as clearly as she could speak for the candy. "I'm so sorry I brought you out."

Millicent was silent.

"I want someone who will manage the children without referring to me," continued Mrs. Patrickson. "Such a treasure of a governess applied to me this morning! I've been wanting to get her for ever so long; only she was always fixed."

A flush rose in Millicent's face. "Did Mrs. Patrickson wish to imply that she was not satisfied with her—that she wished her to leave?"

"Well, it's not downright that," answered the lady, conscious that she had no real fault to find with Millicent, "but I calculate you'd be better off in a more easy place."

"I think I should," honestly assented Millicent.

"I'll look out for you," hastily proposed Mrs. Patrickson, jumping at the admission; "I know I could fix you, Miss Crane. The families here are glad to get an English governess."

"Turned out again like a hunted hare," mentally spoke Millicent. "And away from my own land! What is to be the end?"

"My dear Miss," whispered an elderly lady that evening in the tea room to Millicent, Mrs. Patrickson having publicly said her governess was going to leave, "she's *always* changing. They stayed here before they went over to Europe, and she had five governesses during the time. Five! The children *won't* be managed, you know, and she puts the blame upon the governess."

The following morning, when Millicent was vainly trying to make one of the girls play her scales in correct time, Mrs. Patrickson burst into the room.

"I've got you a place! I knew I should fix you! There's a gentleman in the eating-room who's talking business with my husband, and he says his mother wants a governess dreadfully. It's for two little girls, and you'll be the very thing. He reckons she'll give thirty or forty pounds."

"Do you know the family? Is it one I ought to enter?" inquired Millicent, whom this brusque announcement a little confused.

"One you ought to enter! How suspicious the British are! My husband has done business with the house for years. It's amongst the best in New York City, I can tell you. Simon Pride and Sons."

A faint idea came over Millicent that she had somewhere heard of the firm before; but she did not know how or where.

"The old man is dead now," continued Mrs. Patrickson, "and the three sons carry it on. Tip-top people in all ways. I saw the mother once, but she don't live here, she lives over at Malta. And that's where she'll want you."

"Malta!" ejaculated Millicent. "It will be impossible for me to undertake so long a journey as that."

"My gracious, Miss Crane! But you English are dreadful ignorant! As if I should send you off all the way to the Mediterranean! This Malta's an estate about six miles from here. Simon Pride bought it when he was getting rich; and a pretty place he made of it, spared no dollars. I'm going to write to Mrs. Pride now, right away, and recommend you."

"Are the children Mrs. Pride's?"

"Mrs. Pride's! Well, you have got notions! Why she's sixty years old. They are the children of one of her daughters."

The conclusion of the matter was, that Millicent, after an interview with one of the sons, was engaged; and she went to "Malta" to enter upon her new situation at the appointed time. She was pleased at the appearance of the house, not so much because it was large and handsome, as at the air of comfort which pervaded it. It was more like an English home than any she had seen in

America; but then her experience was limited to the noisy, crowded hotel.

Mrs. Pride, a pleasant, active old lady, stepped forward to greet her when she was shown into the general sitting-room. "My dear," she said, "I'm glad to see you; I hope we shall get along well together. My daughter," she continued, indicating with her hand another lady, who bowed to Millicent without rising.

She was young and handsome: where had Millicent seen her face before? While she was puzzling her memory, the eldest child claimed her attention. A pale, delicate little thing, not five years old, with a heavy eye.

"This child has fits," whispered old Mrs. Pride. "The medical men in England recommended change of air, and my daughter brought them over here."

"Then they have been to England!" said Millicent, a gleam of pleasure lighting her eye, as she thought of her native land.

"It is their home," said the old lady. My daughter married an Englishman. He came over to America on business with our firm, and fell in love with her. We—her father was alive then—were not for the match, because we knew he would take her away from us to his own home. And she was too young besides. Otherwise there could be no objection to Mr. Richard Leite."

Richard Leite! A film rose before the eyes of Millicent. She knew she was in the presence of *his* wife and children; her own once destined husband, her early love. How could she have failed to recognise that lady's face? Its lineaments, though seen but once, had been engraved on her heart and remembered night and day. But it was changed and worn; all its girlishness had gone. American beauties age so very quickly.

"You may have heard his name," went on the chatty old lady. "He is the son of Sir Thomas Crauford Leite. The firm is of great repute in one of your cities—Rockham."

"Yes, I have heard of it," answered Millicent, bending over the little girls to hide her emotion.

"You will be careful to eradicate any Americanisms the children may have picked up, Miss Crane," remarked their mother, in a stiff, cold tone, the first words she had addressed to Millicent. "Their papa has a horror of them. When I first went to England, I was continually popping out some expression or other that offended my husband's fastidious English ears.

Millicent did not hear; a contest had been going on within her. *Ought* she to proclaim that she and Richard Leite were not strangers? Would it be perfectly consistent with honourable open-mindedness to conceal the fact? Perhaps not: and an abhorrence of all deceit was implanted in her by instinct. She nerved herself to the task.

"I believe I know Mr. Leite. That is, I knew him years ago. His family and mine were on friendly terms," she faltered.

"How singular!" exclaimed Mrs. Leite. "Crane, Crane? I have no recollection that he ever mentioned the name. But Mr. Leite is a reserved man, even to me. I tell him sometimes that he is a model of cold politeness."

Cold! reserved! Millicent could not help thinking that had *she* been his wife he would not have been cold and reserved to her.

"Then you come from Rockham, I presume, Miss Crane?"

"Originally. We used to live there, and my father's grave is there. It is many years now since I was at the place.—Yes, my dear, I shall be very pleased to see your dolls," she added to the youngest girl, who was claiming her attention.

The weeks passed on, four of them, and Millicent began to think that she must once more seek another home. Not because she was uncomfortable in this, but because she could not bear, and ought not to encourage, the continued bias her mind received to dwell on Richard Leite. She knew she had not forgotten him: he was still dear to her and ever would be. She had striven, during these last few bitter years, to drive him from her thoughts. But Mrs. Leite, who appeared to be a fond wife, fell into the habit of talking to Millicent of her husband. The old pain, the old anguish of disappointment was returning to Millicent and, school herself as she would, she could not look on Mrs. Leite, his young and happy wife, without a pang of jealous envy. She believed it lay in her line of duty to leave. "When shall I find an asylum that I can stay in?" she murmured; "when, when?"

On the day which completed the first month in the house, she went into Mrs. Leite's chamber to give notice. The latter, ill with a cold on the lungs, had not quitted it for some days. She always seemed to be delicate.

"To speak to me, you say?" cried Mrs. Leite. "Oh, wait a bit: it's nothing particular, I suppose. The English mail is just in, and here are papers and letters. Such a long one from my husband. Here is one for you, Miss Crane, forwarded on last night from Mrs. Patrickson's."

As Mrs. Leite spoke, she laid down her husband's open letter close by Millicent. The latter's eyes fell on it; she recognised the well-remembered characters, and her heart beat more quickly. What business had it to do so now, and he the husband of another?

She took the letter held out to her and broke the outer envelope with little interest, for it was her stepmother's handwriting. But when she came to the letter it enclosed, a suppressed cry of joy escaped her lips. It was from Philip. And she had never heard from him all these later years! She knew afterwards that he had repeatedly written, though the letters never reached her. She ran into her own room to read it, forgetting her notice-giving and everything else.

Oh, what joy! oh, what mercy! Philip was again in England. He had long ago made ample restitution, in a pecuniary point of view, for

his infatuated error; but he seemed to have recovered himself in all ways. He had acquired wealth and standing. A lucky hit at the gold fields had given him the one; his birth and education had helped on the other. He was coming over to America. "My poor Millicent," he wrote, "you have been shamefully buffeted by the world, but I will see if I can make it up to you. You and I will part no more."

Following close upon his letter, Mr. Crane arrived at New York. Millicent went there to meet him. He was much changed, so much older in appearance, and very brown, whilst his manners had acquired a spice of Australian roughness. No matter; he was still her darling brother whom she had so loved in his youth.

How many things they had to say to each other! Philip spoke of his adventures, the hardships he first of all endured, the ups and downs of his life in the service of various Australian settlers, his essay at the gold mines, and his extraordinary success. And Millicent had to tell him of her chances and changes in the cold world. In the midst of their conversation, Philip rose.

"Come along with me, Millicent," he exclaimed: "you have a fresh acquaintance to make. I did not come to America alone."

"You cannot have brought Mrs. Crane!" uttered Millicent, standing still in dismay, and quite oblivious to having called the lady by her wrong name.

"Not Mrs. Crane, our step-dame," he laughed; "I'd as soon have brought a viper. Another Mrs. Crane, Millicent."

Millicent did not understand him, and he opened the door of a bedroom. "Florence," said he, "this is my dear sister. Millicent, do you guess? Need I go on?"

A dim suspicion of the truth dawned into Millicent's mind, for a pretty, ladylike girl, who had been standing outside the window on a sort of balcony which overlooked the garden, came forward, blushing deeply. Yes, it was Philip's wife.

"I knew I should surprise you, Millicent," he went on. "We were only married to come here. I came over with her from Australia, and made her acquaintance on the voyage. She was with her father, Captain Tenby. We were not to have been married till just before we embarked to return to Australia, but when I found you were in America and that I should come here, I thought I might as well bring her with me."

"You intend to return to Australia, then?" inquired Millicent of her brother, as they all sat together, talking, that afternoon.

"To be sure I do. Florence made me promise that before we married. Her family are there. I wanted to come home and see old friends—whether they would turn the cold shoulder upon me; but they welcomed me with open hand. That one unfortunate act of my life, Millicent, has lain upon me a very nightmare."

She raised her eyes to his with a look of caution, half glancing at his young wife.

"Florence knows all," said Philip, understanding the look. "I would not have married her, or anyone else, without first telling her what a black sheep I had been."

"True, true," observed Millicent; "I am forgetting. Of course you would not. Philip, what are the diggings like?"

He burst out laughing. "A regular Bartlemy Fair; an Irish row turned upside down. That's what they are like, Millicent; but then we pick up gold."

"And yet you mean to go back to them?"

"I did not say that," said Mr. Crane. "A married man has little business at the diggings, for he can't take his wife to them. But there are the finest openings possible in Melbourne. A fellow with the money I have may start in no end of agreeable ways and double it in a year or two."

"But if you have enough already?"

Philip laughed again. "Does a man ever think that, Millicent?"

"It will be *cruel* to lose you again," she exclaimed, with almost passionate fervour. "To go through one's years without friends, without sympathy, without hope! Philip, you do not know the monotony of my lonely life."

"*Lose* me," repeated he, "why I have come to America to fetch you. Of course you are going back with us to Australia, and our home will be yours. You have as much right to it as I, Millicent: what should I have done without you through life?"

"I don't know about going," hesitated Millicent, bewildered and half lost in the new prospect opening to her. "It is a long voyage, and I do not like the sea."

"You will like Australia," spoke up the young wife. "It is the fairest spot of all spots on this fair earth."

Though Millicent did not decide off hand to go to Australia, the offer of doing so afforded just the excuse she needed for giving notice to quit Mrs. Pride. The old lady seemed very much put out about it, and her daughter was especially so. Her health was no better; Millicent thought she looked very ill.

"I declare it is always the same," she cried, in a peevish tone. "If I do get anybody about me that's useful, they are sure to leave. I had such a good nurse: she had lived with me ever since Katie was born. The most valuable servant! knew how to manage Katie in her attacks; there was nothing I could not trust to her. Well, just before my boy fell ill and died, she gave me warning—it was to get married—and would leave. I was so provoked with her obstinacy. As if she could ever be so well off as in a good service! Mr. Leite could not see it in the same light. He said if the girl had an opportunity of getting well settled, she was right to do it. I know I have not been settled since with a nurse. And now you are going!"

"I have been here so very short a period," urged Millicent, "that I should think my leaving could be of little moment to you."

"Then you are mistaken, Miss Crane. I have seen in this short time that you are the very person a mother might leave her children with. You are considerate and gentle with them, much more so than I am, and you endeavour, I see, to *train* them well; while your manners are thoroughly English and ladylike—a great point with me. I don't know anyone to whom I would so soon confide my children as to you, to supply the place of a mother."

These words of Mrs. Leite's gave a pleasant thrill to Millicent's heart. "Do you still think of returning soon to England?" she asked.

"Why, of course I do. Four months is a period quite long enough to be away from one's home and husband."

"We must not be selfish, Katherine," said the mother, who had soon come round to a kinder spirit. Our own interests ought not to be put against Miss Crane's new prospects, which look so fair."

"Oh, dear Mrs. Pride," Millicent exclaimed, "I ought to be happy if I go! Think what a life mine has been; nothing but crosses and cares and disappointments, one upon another. Scarcely knowing one month, of late years, where I should be the next; uncertain whether, in my old age, I should not be without a shelter. And now, to have my dear brother back with me to want to take me to his home, to know that we may spend our lives together! I feel that God has at length dealt very mercifully with me."

"As He does by all who look to Him," was the rejoinder of Mrs. Pride.

Millicent returned to New York the following day. In a week Philip and his wife would embark for England. It was a gay and busy time with them, seeing sights, going to theatres, and purchasing pretty things which took the young wife's fancy. An indulged, spoilt child was she, as Millicent saw. She had a sulky fit sometimes, and seemed to turn against Millicent.

One evening Millicent was at her chamber window. It was over the one occupied by her brother and sister-in-law. As she sat there, thinking, she heard Philip step out on the balcony, strike a match, and light his cigar. Millicent leaned forward to look down. Mrs. Crane had followed him. He threw his arm round her waist, and they stood together against the iron railings, he puffing away.

"Florence, my darling," he began, when his cigar was thoroughly alight, "what makes you so cool to my sister? That unkind remark of yours drove her away from us just now." Millicent drew in her head very hastily and sat down again. But she could not avoid hearing.

Florence burst into tears. "It is very cruel of you, Philip, to have her here to be a spy upon me. I can't bear it. I won't bear it long."

"A spy?"

"Yes, she's nothing else. I know she's not. She is so much older than I am, and so grave, and does everything so *right*. When she is by, I feel that all I say, or do, is wrong. And she'll make you think so."

"Whew!" whistled Philip in astonishment, "you are entirely mistaken, Florence. Millicent is quiet and subdued, for she has gone through much sorrow, but you little know her kind and loving heart. A spy!"

"I can see how it is," grumbled Mrs. Philip, reproachfully; "you love her better than you do me."

"My dear, don't be childish. I love Millicent very dearly as a sister, but I love you as a wife. How in the world can you have taken this prejudice against her?"

Mrs. Philip went on sobbing. "What made you ask her to go home and live with us?"

"She has no other home. It is as much my duty—almost—to provide one for her as for you; you never would believe the sacrifices she has made for me. Besides, it will be delightful to have her with us. And you'll think so when you come to know more of her, Florence."

An unlucky speech, in all its bearings, this of Mr. Philip. His wife jerked her waist and herself away from him.

"Then I tell you what it is, Philip: if I don't like things when we get back, she and you shall have the house to yourselves, and I'll go home again and live with mamma."

"All right," said Philip, gaily, hoping to laugh away the temper; "you are a dear little silly goose."

Millicent softly closed the window, and, bending her head upon the bed in a paroxysm of distress, sobbed as if her heart would break. Nobody seemed to want her, nobody in the wide world; not even Philip. Someone, whom in her emotion she had not heard enter, touched her on the sleeve. Lifting her tear-stained face, she saw to her intense surprise old Mrs. Pride.

She had come that day to New York, with her daughter, to the same hotel where the Cranes were stopping. Mrs. Leite, somewhat better, and able to rise from her bed, persisted in sailing as she had originally intended, and had come to New York in pursuance of her preparations. "You are quite unfit to undertake the voyage, Katherine," lamented Mrs. Pride, who had the worst possible opinion of her daughter's state; for unlike her other children, she had never been healthy; "you ought not to go." But Katherine Leite liked to take her own way. "Nothing has ever done me so much good, mother, as my sea voyages," she answered; "I shall be well and strong by the time we reach Liverpool."

"Now, my dear, what is all this?" questioned Mrs. Pride, aghast at witnessing Millicent's storm of grief.

Striving to suppress it, Millicent said a few words indicative of the

truth. "I find they do not really want me," she sobbed. "I had not fully made up my mind, for though the prospect was tempting some instinct has from the first been warning me against it. But they don't want me. Nobody wants me."

"Yes, my dear, somebody does. I want you."

"For me it seems to be only disappointment upon disappointment," sighed Millicent. "Sometimes I am tempted to think that God must be angry with me."

"No, no. All things work together for good to them who love and trust Him," whispered Mrs. Pride. "I have found that to be the truth throughout my life; and you will find it so, my child."

III.

Philip Crane and his wife sailed for England; Mrs. Leite had previously gone. Millicent returned with Mrs. Pride to Malta, to be the governess and temporary mother of the little girls, Kate and Agnes. A great change came gradually and imperceptibly over her heart. She fully resigned herself into the hands of Heaven, striving to do her duty in this world without murmuring, without repining, and Peace entered into it. Had death suddenly come to Millicent in the night, it would neither have shocked her nor found her unprepared. Death, however, did come to another.

One day, not six weeks after Mrs. Leite's departure, the old lady entered the room where Millicent was sitting, an open letter in her hand.

"I strove to impress resignation on you," she said, the tears coursing down her cheeks: "I have need of it myself, now. My child is no more."

"Which child?" exclaimed the startled Millicent.

"Katherine, my youngest and dearest. I was sure that cold had settled on her lungs, but she *would* brave it, and departed. It may be that she felt her illness was to be serious, and yearned to be with her husband. That was natural. But she grew worse on the passage, and died in a week after reaching her home at Rockham."

Millicent read the letter which Mrs. Pride put into her hands, the old familiar handwriting. Richard Leite appeared to mourn his wife sincerely. Millicent prayed for resignation for him, and redoubled her care of the little motherless children.

Several months passed, and Millicent's days were gliding on, calmly and peacefully. The only thing to trouble them was the increasing illness of little Kate. Mrs. Pride did not think they could save her. Millicent heard occasionally from Philip. He informed her that he was succeeding at Melbourne beyond his expectations, and he thought they should soon come home to England to settle, for his wife's family was returning thither. And *she* wrote that a little stranger had arrived to bless them, whom they had named "Millicent," and she hoped that when they met again, instead of fearing her sister

Millicent, she should have learnt to love her. Millicent felt very thankful.

There were to be more changes. The little child, Kate, died. And Mr. Leite wrote that he was coming to New York to take home the other, Agnes. Mrs. Pride regretted it, and especially that she should have no further occasion for the services of Millicent, for she had learnt to love her.

"Do you know what I have been thinking of—what I wish?" she suddenly exclaimed to her one day.

"No," answered Millicent.

"That Richard Leite would learn to appreciate your excellences, and make you his wife. He is sure to marry again: all widowers of his age do: and he'll most likely pick up some grand lady, fine and selfish, who will dislike or neglect the child; there'll be plenty fishing for him. No hope that he'll find such a treasure as you are."

Millicent's heart beat painfully, and she answered some confused words about "impossibilities."

There was to be some delay yet, however, in Mr. Leite's arrival. He was detained at home by the severe illness of his father; and another month or two went on.

When he did at last come it was unexpectedly. Mrs. Pride and Millicent were sitting together one evening, the latter with little Agnes on her knee, when their English servant entered to say that a gentleman had called.

"You can show him in here, Marcus," said Mrs. Pride—and the visitor came in, the servant announcing him:

"Sir Richard Leite."

He was much altered. His hair was tinged with grey, and scanty on the temples, showing forth his fine, expansive forehead, and on his face there was a graver look than formerly. More than seven years had passed since they met. Millicent wondered whether she was equally changed.

"Oh, Richard, Richard," cried Mrs. Pride, standing forward with outstretched hands, "I am sure, by that announcement, your good father must be dead!"

"Yes," he sadly answered, as he stooped to kiss the good old lady's fresh and pleasant face, "we laid him in the grave but a few days before I left. I did not write to you; I preferred to bring the news."

"Poor Sir Thomas!" she sighed.

The little child, Agnes, had run to her father; he caught her up in his arms. Not until then did he advance to Millicent, who had risen to receive him. There was not the slightest colour in her cheeks or lips.

"Miss Crane, the governess," said Mrs. Pride. "I have mentioned in my letters to you what a treasure she has been to your little girls. Poor Katherine could have spoken to it, but she probably was too ill, when she reached you, to remember these things. Miss Crane has well supplied her place."

Richard Leite gazed in the greatest surprise. "Millicent!" he impulsively exclaimed, "is it *you* who have been with my children? That it was a Miss Crane, I knew, but it never occurred to me to think it might be the Miss Crane of my younger days. I thank you gratefully for all your kindness to them."

"I was in want of a situation—I accepted this with Mrs. Pride—I did not know, until afterwards, that the children were yours," some feeling in her heart prompted her to say, eagerly and hastily.

Their hands were locked together, for he had taken hers and did not release it. "I have sometimes wondered what became of you," said he. "I had no idea you had left England."

"But you might have known, living in her native town," interposed Mrs. Pride, who felt a little puzzled. "Perhaps you never inquired, Richard."

"No. To what end?" he rejoined, in an abstracted kind of manner, more as if speaking to himself. And the colour slowly returned to Millicent's pale face as she resumed her seat.

And now all became bustle and preparation at Malta. Sir Richard's stay in America was to be a limited one, and much of that was spent in New York. Agnes, with the coloured nurse, Judy, was to accompany him to England. Millicent only waited their departure to look out for another situation.

"Why can't you come with us in the ship and be my governess still, Miss Crane?" asked the child, as she stood watching Judy packing up her dolls in a box.

Millicent shook her head. "I shall never be your governess, again, dear."

"Grandma thinks papa will send me to school; he'll not care to be troubled with a little girl who has no mamma to see to her. I sha'n't like school. Judy says they'll be cross there and beat me."

"Judy should not say so. She does not know anything about it. I am sure you will always be good, Agnes, dear, and then no one will ever be cross to you, at school or at home."

"Agnes is in a fine way, thinking she shall be sent to school when you get to Rockham," remarked old Mrs. Pride that evening, with a laugh, to Sir Richard Leite, who was again at Malta.

"Well, I don't see what else I can do with her. Do you?"

The old lady, who was knitting a stocking, knitted on for a full minute before she spoke.

"Society has such odd notions in your country, Richard. Folks might get talking, I reckon, if you took a governess into the house."

He laughed slightly. "I dare say they would. Might depend upon the lady's age, though."

"Miss Crane, say?"

"Oh, she's ever so much too young. No; I could never take *her* into my house as governess."

Mrs. Pride sighed. "You will never get one to be to the child what

she has been. Do you never think of marrying again, Richard?" she added, looking at him wistfully.

"I have not thought about it," he answered, in a dreamy tone.

"Poor Katherine has been dead a year."

Sir Richard looked quickly at her. "Why!" he said smiling, "do you wish me to marry again?"

"My dear, I'll say no more. If I did wish you to—and mention one who would, as I think, be more eligible than all the rest of the world, you would only laugh at me; so I'll say no more. You'll be snapped up by some grand, useless dame, who'll be too fine to notice your child."

"Oh no, I sha'n't," he answered.

The old lady knitted away as if her needles were hot. "Don't speak so securely. You're an attractive man, you know, and you're a baronet, and you've a sight of money; and those are things the girls run after, Richard Leite."

"They'll find it of no use to run after me," said he, significantly. "Shall I tell you a secret, dear Mrs. Pride?—that there is one lady who in my opinion is more eligible, as you have just put it, to be my wife than all others in the world. I am not sure that she will have me, but—I shall never marry anyone else."

Somewhat later, in passing the open door of a room where the luggage was collected, Sir Richard saw Millicent sitting on a trunk. She was tired in body, for she had been helping Judy to pack, and weary in spirit.

"What a quantity of baggage," he exclaimed. "Surely Agnes does not need all that!"

"Some of it is Judy's," replied Millicent, as she stood up.

Sir Richard advanced to her. "How can I repay you," he said, in a low tone, "for your goodness to my children?—this one and the little one who is gone."

"I do not require payment: I do not understand," she answered. "I have only done my duty."

"You are looking out for another situation, Mrs. Pride tells me?"

"Yes. In New York."

"You may not get a desirable one?"

"Probably not," she answered, the tears starting to her eyes in spite of herself. "I shall not get such another as this. I have been very comfortable with Mrs. Pride."

"What is there to prevent your remaining with Agnes, though she does come home? Should you not feel as comfortable in my house as in this?"

Millicent shook her head. "It could not be, Sir Richard," she answered, in a low tone, wondering that he should put the question.

"It is the same house, Millicent. The house that once was to have been yours."

The colour flew over her face. Was he mocking her?

"And so we are to part again, with a farewell shake of the hand—like this," he went on, taking Millicent's hand in his and retaining it. "Is there no help for it?"

"None."

"No help; no remedy, Millicent?"

She could not repeat her answer. She was much agitated.

"Millicent, my dear, there is a help for it," he tenderly whispered. "Come into my house as governess?—no, that could never be; but surely you can come as my wife. Do you think I have forgotten you in all these long years?"

Her sobs rose hysterically.

"You, and you only, have a place in my heart, a right in my home. *You know it, Millicent.* Come and make my happiness. We have both had our trials, I as well as you. Come home with me; my second, but my dearest, wife."

"Oh, Richard, do you mean it?"

"*Mean* it!" he repeated, not less agitated than she was. And he folded her to his heart with an impassioned gesture, and took from her lips the kisses he had left on them years before. Sweeter kisses than he had ever given since.

Were the heavens smiling on Millicent now? Ay, in one flood of golden sunshine.

"My dear child," said old Mrs. Pride, dropping tears of gladness, when she became enlightened as to what was to happen, and Millicent had made known to her the full story of the past, "what did I once beg you to remember in your sorrow—*That all things work together for good to them who put their trust in God.*"

Some change was made in the routine of progress. Sir Richard Leite delayed his departure for a month, and Millicent was married from Mrs. Pride's. In about a week after that event, they sailed for home with the child, an English maid and the coloured nurse in attendance.

One day, when the sea was calm, Lady Leite sat in an unfrequented part of the deck, watching the sparkle of the waves which the steamer's progress left behind it—just as she had once sat when going out with the Patricksons. What a contrast it was!—this time and that. Then, look where she would, the world for her held nothing but sadness, had held it for years; now she could see only joy everywhere, in the heavens and in the earth.

"What is it, Millicent?" her husband asked, coming up and detecting the tears of emotion filling in her eyes.

"I was only thinking of the past, Richard," she answered. "And of the strange turn of Fate which has brought back the happiness I lost years ago: through, I remember you said, my own folly."

"And so it was, my darling; your own folly. Nothing else separated us."

A NIGHT ADVENTURE.

SINGULAR and improbable as the following adventure may appear, I must begin by saying that every word of it is true. I have neither added to the facts nor taken from them.

My husband and I were in Vienna; and after looking through Bradshaw, we determined to return home by way of Trieste and Venice, stopping on the road at some point in Styria to break the journey and use the opportunity for seeing something of the lovely country.

So the next morning, Saturday, we were at the station by a quarter-past nine, where we were surprised to find a crowd of persons all taking tickets for the little quiet town we had decided upon as our resting-place. Still our minds did not dwell upon the circumstance, as they were fully occupied by the thought of passing over the wonderful *Semmering*, of which we had heard so much.

What with the excitement and fatigue of the long journey, we were faint and weary when we reached the beautiful little town of Gratz at half-past seven in the evening. The number of people who got out at this station perfectly amazed us; but as the majority of them merely had a hand-bag they were soon through the waiting-room and away to the town, either on foot or in the few cabs which had been awaiting the arrival of the train.

We, who had luggage, were not so fortunate, but had to wait patiently until the slowest of country porters managed to deliver it in exchange for our tickets. Even when this was achieved we were compelled to wait for a return cab.

At length one arrived, and our large leather trunk was hoisted to the top. We told the man to drive to the "Hôtel Eléphant."

"Not a bit of use, ma'am," returned he. "It is crammed, and they have sent away every fare we have taken there to-day."

I went back into the station and asked the station-master if he could help us in our difficulty by telling us of any other decent hotel where we could get food and a night's rest. He mentioned one or two, but doubted whether they would be able to take us in. The morrow, Sunday, was a Grand Festival, and Choral Unions from all parts of Austria had come to take part in it. Still, as he said, there would be no harm in trying.

Through the town and around the town we drove till it became so late that the streets were deserted and lights began to disappear from the houses. I could bear it no longer. It was now nearly eleven o'clock. I stopped the cab and said: "Let there be an end of this. Drive to the Hôtel Eléphant, where we can at least get food, and rest in the dining-room."

This roused the man, and he replied :

"I've done the best I could, ma'am, but you see every place is full. I do know of a sort of hotel about a mile the other side of the town, where they would be sure to be able to give you accommodation. The landlord is a friend of mine."

"Then why on earth did you not say so before?"

"Well, because it is not fit for people like you; but it is better than nothing."

"Drive to it at once," I replied. And away we went.

We were soon out of the town, and for more than half an hour drove through dark wooded lanes and country roads, where not a house or a light could be seen.

"Where on earth are you taking us?" said I, putting my head out of the window.

"All right, ma'am," replied the man, "we shall soon be there."

"But it is not all right; we are more than two miles from the town already, and we will not go any farther."

"Only two minutes more," he persisted, urging on his horse; and I saw that he meant to have his own way.

At last the cab stopped before a long narrow building, and the driver, giving a peculiar whistle, a large, burly looking-man, with immense black beard and shaggy eyebrows, came out with a lamp in his hand, partly closing the door as he did so. The coachman spoke a few words in a dialect I did not know, but which had the effect of bringing him to us. I asked if we could be accommodated for the night.

"Certainly," was the answer.

The box was lifted down; we paid an exorbitant sum for the use of the cab; and not until the cabman had driven off was there the least attempt to admit us into the low building. The landlord then gave orders to a couple of men who came out of the darkness to follow us with the box, after which he threw open the door and bid us enter.

We paused on the threshold, spellbound. The sight that met our eyes was so appalling that late though the hour, and weak and faint as I was, we should have run back to the town only that we knew that for the present, at least, our liberty was gone. So we did the best thing possible under the circumstances: faced our position without, I believe, one particle of fear appearing in our manner.

The room was long and narrow, a number of small tables stood on either side with a narrow space between them for passing up and down. Seated at these were sixty or seventy men of all ages, from the youth of eighteen to the old man of seventy—the most repulsive, evil, ragged-looking creatures I had ever seen; all eating, drinking, smoking, singing, and swearing.

Our entrance seemed to cause unbounded astonishment, and in the moment's hush which followed, the landlord said in a thundering voice: "Gentlemen! I bring visitors."

Gazing round to notice the effect of these words, I saw that they had brought out a more hateful look of greed and savagery on their faces, especially so when they looked at the well-made trunk which was being brought in behind us.

At the end of this long room a door admitted us into a small, bare apartment, containing a table, two old chairs, and a stove, at which a repulsive old woman was cooking. The atmosphere was sickening. Down we sat, however, our trunk beside us. I asked for coffee and something to eat to be served at once, and to be shown to our room.

"All in good time," was the half insolent rejoinder of the landlord as he left us. For a moment only I lost heart, but was roused by seeing my husband half fainting, for he was a great invalid, and our contretemps had worn him out. The old woman, a greasy spoon in one hand, a fork in the other, and each hand resting on her hips, was regarding us with contempt and hate. Our eyes met.

"Give us water if you cannot give us coffee," said I, "and if you are a woman, help us. Show us our room."

The answer was an ugly laugh, as she turned to her frying-pan.

At this moment a girl entered for dishes of meat for the long room. At the first moment I scarcely took her for a human being. Legs and feet were bare; she was a mass of rags, held together round her waist by a string; her neck and arms were also bare; her hair was black and came down to her waist in one mass of tangle. To crown all, she was black as a sweep.

She evidently had not known of our entrance, and her fear and despair at finding us there was evident.

Mixed with this was a sort of admiration. She came and knelt before me, looked up into my face, felt my dress, and catching sight of a diamond ring on my finger, gave a quick glance at the old woman. Seeing her busy frying, she made a rapid movement, exhorting me to take it off and hide it.

"Get up and take this meat to your master," was the command of the old woman the next moment. As she was leaving the room, I said: "Pray help us, and bring us some bread and a glass of milk or water." The girl looked so sorrowful and full of fear that she almost induced me to become a coward.

In a few minutes, however, she actually returned with some rolls and two cups of black steaming coffee, the smell of which was refreshing and reviving. As she put it before us she made a rapid sign that we were not to drink it, as it would make us sleep. She brought us also a little water in a jug, which we drank, and at the same time eat a roll.

After this we desired to go to our room, but the answer from the old woman was we were to be patient, and as soon as she had done cooking for the lot in the next room she would make the bed.

At length she departed, with a longing look at the box. In a few

moments the girl made her appearance, put her hands together as if in prayer, and touching her eyes, showed us we must not sleep, and was off again in an instant.

My husband and I consulted together—I do not think he knew what fear was for himself—and we arranged that when we should be shown our room one must rest while the other kept awake, and so take it in turn. We also came to the conclusion that the girl was our friend, for she had prevented our drinking the drugged coffee, and might possibly be able to help in some other way.

While we were thus talking the man came in. It was almost impossible to hear ourselves speak for the singing and shouting of the mob, removed from us only by a thin door. The man was evidently annoyed at our not having taken the coffee, and wanted to know what was the matter with it, at the same time looking searchingly at us. I told him it had been so long in coming that we should not sleep if we took it now, and begged him to hasten the preparing of our room.

He left, but returned in a few minutes, followed unconsciously by the girl. Our room was ready, and he hoped we should sleep well. Turning sharply round he saw the girl, and in a fit of rage was about to strike her; but, recovering himself, said in a dialect he had no idea I could understand: "You little black imp, if you dodge my footsteps and interfere with me, I'll kill you! Be off to bed."

The room in which we were to sleep joined that in which we were sitting, and was at the extreme end of the long narrow building. The old woman gave us a small piece of tallow candle stuck in a bottle, and pointing to the room said, "It is ready;" then very reluctantly helped me in with our trunk, with more strength than I should have thought her capable of. Outside the door I heard her laugh, a low cruel laugh, and mutter something of which I could not catch the meaning, but it sounded anything but reassuring.

At length we were alone—but where?

In a tolerably large room, as far as I could judge, with a door which would not lock; a window so high that we could not tell whether or not it was fastened, and which had a thick blind before it, so as to exclude all light. Two sides of the room were hung from the top to the bottom with suits of garments of every description, from a monk's to a mendicant's, evidently lent out on hire to the thieves and beggars who resorted thither.

In the room was a large chest of drawers, a rather heavy table, a couple of chairs, and a small iron bedstead, on which was a sack of straw, covered by a clean, coarse pair of linen sheets, and a dirty woollen coverlet. The floor was bare of carpet, but very dirty, and there was neither chink nor cranny to admit a breath of fresh air.

Such was the room in which we found ourselves at one o'clock in the morning, with a considerable sum of money in our pockets, and some valuable jewellery I had brought, in consequence of having to

appear in society in one or two of the capitals through which we had passed. A good, stout, sharp knife was our only visible protection. Almost before we had made a survey of the room the candle was burning to its socket. This we could remedy if we desired, as we had matches and a wax candle in our bag. There was not a drop of water nor any sign of wash-stand.

We both felt that if we escaped with our lives it would be by the mercy of God, in whom we trusted. How the deed was to be done we knew not, but that it would be attempted we were certain. Our first work was to secure the door. We therefore drew, or rather carried the heavy table, and placed it quietly against it. On this we put the chairs, and in order to keep all firm we drew our trunk towards the legs of the table.

We noticed that the bed was placed quite close to the wall and that the dirty suits of clothes were dangling over it, so we removed it half a yard further into the room, and then, as quickly as possible, dressed as we were, lay down without a thought of sleep crossing our minds. We did not speak, but every sense was strained to catch the slightest sound.

We had been reclining in this manner probably for half-an-hour, when we both felt that the bed was moving. In a second I was on the floor. The bed seemed all right and we heard no noise, and I began to think it a trick of fancy, the result of over-strained nerves.

We lay down again, and in a few minutes the movement was repeated.

Again we were on our feet in a moment. "Thank God we moved the bed from the wall and so disarranged the machinery, otherwise we should have been in the cellars by this time," my husband whispered.

Nothing more happened for the present. A long time seemed to pass, probably not more than half-an-hour in reality, when our ears caught the sound of some one stealthily trying the handle of the door. Evidently there was surprise at meeting with opposition, for we heard a low whispering. Again the handle was tried, but without effect. Presently there came a tapping at the door, at first gentle, then loud and peremptory.

"Have you your knife ready?" I asked my husband, and being assured of it, I answered in a sleepy tone, as if I had been awakened: "Who's there? What do you want?"

"Excuse me, lady," said a man's voice, "but I want something from the chest of drawers."

"Then you must wait till morning for it. We cannot let you in now. Good night." I heard the man mutter an oath—again the knocking and again the demand for admittance. We knew well that the obstacle we had placed to their entrance could have been removed in a minute by a couple of strong men, so I made a virtue of necessity and called out:

"Well, if you must I suppose you must, but I won't have a man in the room. Send the old woman or the girl. We will admit one only and the second who enters we will shoot or cut down."

The answer came in the voice of the old woman:

"Then let me in. I want clothes for some people who are going away."

Cautiously we removed our barricade just sufficiently to let the woman enter. We were in darkness, but she had brought in a candle and the first thing that met her eye was our large knife with the blade drawn. She muttered and scowled while she went to the drawers and searched apparently for what she did not expect to find.

"Come, be quick," said I, as I saw her eyes peering to where the bed stood in darkness; "you disturb our sleep."

She would have struck me, I verily believe, but for the knife, which was held close to her until we had pushed her out of the door. It was evident that she came to find out why the bed had not sent us below.

Once again we barricaded our room, and once again we were alone.

It was about four o'clock on the Sunday morning when the voice of the landlord was heard peremptorily demanding admittance, as he required more of the suits of clothes hanging up in our room. Asking God's help, I drew near the door and said:

"I believe you are the landlord, and if so, listen: We are English people, and have the means in this room of protecting ourselves. Beside this, the station-master and railway porters know by this time where we are, for I specially asked their advice, and they will know how to identify the cabman who brought us here. You shall not enter the room. We will leave this place at seven o'clock and you will be wise to leave us in peace until then."

There was no answer, and quietly we waited, sitting on our trunk till six o'clock, when I boldly opened the door and went out in search of water to wash.

The old woman and three or four men lay in deep sleep in the room adjoining ours, and the door of the long room being open I stood for a moment looking at the sight. Men lay about in all directions, across the tables, on the benches, and on the floors. I could find no one of whom to ask anything, till at length I spied the girl who had so befriended us. She swiftly and quietly followed me into our room, where she showed every sign of joy that we were alive and well. She flew to get us water, but only brought us about a pint in a broken jug, and with it a piece of coarse brown bread. She had no idea we required the water for washing. Of course there was no towel in the room, so we took a couple of clean pockethandkerchiefs out of our bag, and dipping the corners of them into the broken jug wiped our soiled faces and hands, much to the surprise of the girl, who was looking on. I put a bright new Austrian gulden into her hand and bade her keep it in memory of us; but it was now

her turn to surprise us. Instead of hiding it and being delighted with it, as we supposed would be the case, she kissed it almost reverentially and laid it back in my hand, shaking her head the meanwhile. I was very nearly kissing this half-wild girl, in spite of dirt and tangled hair.

The next thing was how to get away. We had merely the leather trunk and a hand-bag. The first was locked and strapped, and the other not too heavy for us to carry. We took out a certain sum of money, which we thought would serve to pay our bill, before sending for the man, so as not to tempt him by the sight of gold. On his appearing, I said: "Be so good as to make out our bill."

"I can tell you how much it is," said he; "we never make out bills here."

"As you please," I returned; "we shall not pay without."

With an evil countenance he went to do our bidding, and presently came back with a dirty envelope, on which was written, in German characters and money, a total of £1 3*s*. I was about to object, but my husband's hearty laugh at the audacious account made me think better of it. We paid it, but before doing so I said:

"We leave in your care for a couple of hours our trunk, and it will be to your advantage that nothing happens to it. Be so good as to write on this envelope that you have it in your charge, and in exchange for the paper you will give up the box."

Taking up our bag, the man led the way through the long room. As we reached the door he made over the bag, saying, "I hope you will do us no harm. We have done the best we could. It was not a fit place to bring you to."

It was a lovely morning as we stepped out into the fresh invigorating atmosphere, and you may be sure our hearts were full of thankfulness for so merciful an escape. We made our way into the town, which we found to be nearly three miles distant from the place where we had passed the night.

We went direct to the Hôtel Elephant, where we were received with every kindness and attention, notwithstanding our wretched appearance. The inn had not been full on the previous day, neither had they refused visitors, so we were the victims of our own carelessness. A policeman went for the trunk, and it was delivered to us about an hour and a half after our arrival. No one can ever imagine how we enjoyed the cleanliness and elegance of food and rooms, things which we take as a matter of course when no accident occurs to deprive us of them. We stayed for a few days, not only to see the lovely country but to recruit health and nerves, which had been terribly shaken by our Night Adventure.

E. Brewer.

SIR LEO.

(An Incident in the History of the —— Family.)

Not a cheek there but turned pale,
As the Baron told his tale,
In such grim and ghastly colours was it painted ;
Lords and ladies held their breath,
He had frightened them to death,
And three maiden aunts screamed suddenly and fainted.

But Sir Leo only laughed,
As a brimming bowl he quaffed :
"Your story, Baron, charms me beyond measure ;
Ghosts and goblins ! nonsense ! bah !
Haunted chambers ! ha ! ha ! ha !
I will pass a night or two in it with pleasure."

Then the Baron with a frown :
"Knights and nobles of renown,
Friend and comrade, brother, relative and stranger,
Each and all my counsel spurned,
And not one of them returned,
Gallant Leo—so I warn you of your danger."

Not a nerve or finger shook,
As his taper up he took,
And paced down the long dim corridor undaunted ;
Dust had gathered on the floor,
Cobwebs hung about the door,
And there figured on one panel the word "Haunted!"

"Au revoir," the Baron said,
As he bowed his guest to bed :
"Ill luck betide the chamber and the story!"
And then back again they go
To the wassail hall below :
"Far better he fell on the field of glory."

As the castle bell tolled "One,"
Some dark deed must have been done,
For there were shrieks and groans and noises without number;
Every listener's blood ran chill,
And then all again was still :
What horrid sounds were those that broke their slumber?

"Comes he not to break his fast?"
Nearly ended the repast,
Still Sir Leo does not put in an appearance ;
So they climb the castle stairs,
Each repeating a few prayers,
And invoking some small saintly interference.

They have reached the haunted room,
They are gazing through the gloom,
Prying, peeping over one another's shoulder;
Peering in, on muffled tread,
Between the hangings of the bed
Dropping piecemeal—left to mildew and to moulder.

Not a movement, not a sound,
Though the tapestry around
Seemed to stir with a soft stealthy undulation;
Once—twice they saw it wave,
But all was silent as the grave,
All was breathless as the hour before Creation!

From a black beam overhead,
By a rope of filmy thread,
Keenly watching, with an eye of cold suspicion,
Hung a spider, undismayed,
Wondering why this sudden raid,
What the object of this secret expedition.

No Sir Leo found they here,
But his naked sword lay near,
And his helmet, cloven cleanly down the centre;
With a dagger, snapped in two,
And a pool of purple hue,
By a closet that none dare approach or enter.

Then the bells rang startling peals,
And they all took to their heels,
For they heard a most unearthly noise and clatter;
Tumbling down the polished flights,
Fearing other dreadful sights,
And not waiting to learn more about the matter.

Though a century has flown,
Nothing more was ever known
Of Sir Leo, all is mystery and wonder;
But his rusty sword lies there,
And some tufts of tangled hair,
And the dagger haft and helmet split asunder.

Let his rusty sword remain,
And the dagger and the stain,
Where the red blood wore itself a ruby channel;
With the dust upon the floor,
And the cobwebs round the door,
And that terrible announcement on its panel!

LINDON MEADOWS.

"ON TRIAL."

By the Author of "Molly Bawn."

SHE was one of those girls who are perhaps more attractive than strictly pretty, because certainly her features had their faults. Her skin, however, was like satin—creamy, delicious, with a little soft flush running through it; and over her low, broad brow her chestnut hair fell in a soft natural wave. No maid had ever cut it; it was in fact 'born so,' and it blew from side to side as the wind listed, and was touched with gold here and there, and had indeed a good deal to do with her many conquests.

Her first season had pronounced her an undeniable success; which meant that to her brother, Lord Hartley, she became at once a decided anxiety. She was never now without one, or rather two, young men dangling after her wherever she went, not only to balls and at homes in town, but to the Tyrol or the Highlands afterwards, and wherever the Hartleys might chance to go. It was indeed Lady Hartley's private opinion that had they elected to go to Hudson's Bay for the winter, there these young men would have appeared up to time, and ready as ever to fall down and worship her sister-in-law.

And they weren't always the same two young men, either: that added to the grievance. Miss Charteris had many little ways, but the cleverest of all was the little way in which she used to get rid of a suitor when he grew importunate. This cleverness was hardly appreciated by Lady Hartley, upon whom fell, as a rule, the task of consoling and smoothing down the discarded one. She was thus compelled to think a good deal about Sophy, off and on, and just now she was particularly anxious about her, because she feared she was going to decline the best match of the year. Lady Hartley was young herself, and was not without sympathy and affection for her sister-in-law, but she certainly thought her very foolish: and she didn't in the least know how to manage her. She was a very nice woman, if a trifle plaintive and given to looking at the unwearable side of most things. She was a good woman too, intensely devoted to her nursery, as a good woman should be, but she was, perhaps, a trifle dull.

Just now she was worrying over two things: the baby's teething, which exercised her mind quite as much as though she had not seen three other babies get through the same obnoxious process, and her fear that Sophy would at the last refuse Lord Elston's hand—and very handsome rent roll. She was divided between these two anxieties, when the door opened and Sophy herself entered the room.

"Anything the matter, Molly?" asked she, after a cursory glance at Lady Hartley's inexpressive features. The latter had been christened a decorous Mary by an Archbishop, but Miss Charteris

insisted on calling her Molly, which of course was a trial. She came across the room now with her usual light, swift step, and leant over the back of Lady Hartley's chair.

"Are the children all right?" she asked. "Baby's tooth through yet? You look as if someone had been giving you a severe scolding."

"I have many things to worry me," said Lady Hartley, with a sigh. "And, of course, I cannot help feeling anxious about baby."

"That big, fat baby!" said Miss Charteris, laughing. "Dear Molly, how silly! It is merely his teething—*I hope*—that induces him to give way to those wild fits of diabolical temper."

"Oh, no! He is not ill-tempered. He has the temper of a very angel," interrupted the mother, reproachfully. "It is all, I am convinced, the fault of that coral his grandmother sent him."

"Then why let him have it? Why not get him a proper ring? Edith never has any others. A thick, soft india-rubber ring. It is not pretty, but babies like it, which, of course, is everything."

"And how am I to get one in this out-of-the-way place?" returned Lady Hartley, helplessly.

"I'll write to George. He is coming down for these theatricals, you know, the day after to-morrow, and he shall bring it."

"George!" Lady Hartley repeated, regarding her anxiously. "Do you mean to tell me you write to George?"

"Now and then."

"After all that passed between you last spring? Do you think Lord Elston would like it, if he heard of it?"

"I don't know, so I can't say."

"Sophy!" said Lady Hartley, in a solemn tone, "I do hope you are not going to do anything foolish with regard to Elston!"

"I hope not, indeed," said Miss Charteris, with a solemnity that put her sister's in the shade, but she rather spoiled it by laughing afterwards.

"It is distinctly wrong of you to encourage George. And you *must* know," waxing a little warm, "that even one line from you in his present frame of mind will be sufficient to waken all the old regret. Now, Sophy, tell me one thing, do you or do you not like Lord Elston?"

Miss Charteris employed herself for a moment or two in looking deeply into the fire. Then she said, with the most indifferent air in the world:

"I'm not sure."

"That terrible sentence!" cried Lady Hartley, impatiently; "I'm tired of it. Invent another, I beseech you. No, don't stand there. Come round here where I can see you. Do you know that chronic state of yours of not being sure is causing you to be rather too freely discussed by your friends? And for a girl to be talked about—that, you will admit, is undesirable. And you know, too, that when people once begin to talk they never know where to stop."

"I do, indeed," returned Miss Charteris, with a comical glance at her.

"You mean that for me, of course. But I don't mind. I shall do my duty, whatever comes of it. And now, what fault do you see in Lord Elston?"

"He is too rich and too jealous."

"His jealousy proves his love. And if riches stand in his way, why, it is the first time I ever knew them regarded as an objection. And you should be the last to say that. You know you said last year you refused George because he was too poor."

"That only shows how I hate extremes. George *is* too poor; Lord Elston too rich."

"Nonsense. I begin to think you have still a secret kindness for George."

"I hope you are wrong. As, in spite of the passion you think he still entertains for me, I hear he has fallen a victim to the beaux yeux of that youngest Miss Wolverton. Ah! Molly, I fear my swains are not so faithful as yours were."

"I trust that what you tell me is true. If, indeed, you do not think of George, why can't you make up your mind to Elston?"

"I have told you. Never mind what I said about his money—if you will have my real reason—it is his jealous disposition that I dread. How could I expect happiness with a man who suspects me of—of all sorts of things the moment I am out of his sight?"

"Of flirting with other men, you mean. You cannot deny, Sophy, that you have given him cause."

"Well, not for a long time now. Not lately; yet he is as suspicious as ever."

"Once married, that would be all at an end."

"So you think.—No; I should be afraid to venture."

"Is that your only reason for hesitating?"

Miss Charteris blushed and then laughed lightly.

"You ask me a good deal," she said. "Well, even if I do confess to its being an only one, surely it is as strong as twenty smaller ones. There! I shan't submit to any further cross-examination. I shall go and give George directions about that ring."

She moved towards the door. Lady Hartley called after her.

"Don't be too hard on him," she said. "You know you wouldn't like it were he utterly devoid of jealousy. Give him a chance. Why not find some way of putting him on trial for a certain time, to test him?"

"But I know of no plan," returned Sophy, carelessly.

As she crossed the hall, the door of the library opened and a young man came towards her. He was tall and well made and about twenty-nine. He was dressed in tennis flannel and held a racket in his hand. He had very dark, earnest eyes, and these lit up as he saw Miss Charteris.

"I was just going to look for you, Sophy. Come out, and let me give you a beating."

"I like that!" said she, contemptuously. "Put it the other way round and I may be able to understand you. No, I can't go yet. I should like a game, but there is something I must do first."

"There always is," returned he, in an aggrieved tone. "As a rule I always come off second best with you."

"And quite right too," she laughed saucily.

"I wonder if you care for me at all?" said Elston, in a gloomy sort of way."

"Yes, I do," returned she, "*sometimes.*"

"Which means that I annoy you 'sometimes.' Is that it? Why are you silent, Sophy? Tell me my sin."

"Would you really have me tell you?" asked she, gravely, lifting her eyes to his.

"I would, indeed."

"Why, then," said she, softly: "Beware, my lord, of jealousy."

"Jealous! You think me jealous!" exclaimed he. "Why, I believe I am the least jealous man on earth. Were it otherwise, you ——" He stopped abruptly.

"Go on," said she, a little haughtily. "Were it otherwise you think I should give you food for it; but you forget that there is no reason why I should study your wishes. You have no claim on me."

This was a little cruel of her, but she was angry.

"I know that," he said, humbly. He regarded her with a keen reproach. "Sophy! will you never give me that claim?"

"I tell you I should be afraid," said Miss Charteris, softened in a degree by that submissive glance, but still rather impatiently. "A jealous man is a terrible thing."

"I think you misjudge me. Of course, very naturally, I should like all your smiles to be my own, but I do not really believe I am the irrational creature you would portray me. Try me, Sophy. Give yourself to me and I do not think you will repent it."

He had taken her hand, and now, holding it fast, sought to read her eyes. But she kept them religiously lowered. Still she did not draw her hand away, and it was evident that she hesitated. It even seemed to him, by the yielding of her lips, that she was almost on the point of speech that would declare her won, when suddenly she moved back from him and shook her charming head. There was a new light in her eyes as she looked up, as though she had come to some strange resolution.

"I shall put you on trial first," she said, gaily. Lady Hartley's last words, though still so fresh in her mind, were already bearing fruit. "Do not look so frightened," she went on, smiling. "Your probation shall not be too prolonged. Just one small week! If during those seven days you prove yourself three times *unreasonably* jealous of any act of mine, you will——"

"*Three* times! Oh, absurd!" he said, hastily. "You cannot really imagine me so senseless as that."

"I am generous, you see," said she, calmly. "As you yourself admit, I give you a large margin. Perhaps," with a slight but charming blush, "I do not wish you to fail. Well!—*No!* Stay just there and listen. If you *should* chance to sin thus three times, you will give me your word to relinquish for ever all hope of—well, of—oh, you know!" she said. "On the other hand, if you do not sin thrice, I for my part will promise to ——"

"Yes, go on," entreated he, eagerly. "You will give yourself to me as my reward. Is that it?"

"Let it be so," said she, smiling prettily, whilst her blush deepened. He bent over her hands and kissed them with a fond and tender passion.

"I did not think this morning that midday would see me so happy a man," he said, with glad triumph, his dark eyes alight.

"Do not boast," said she, warningly. But she smiled as she warned, and he heeded only the smile.

"This is Thursday. This day week I shall envy no man."

She ran away from him, up two or three steps of the staircase, but his voice compelled her to stop.

"Don't be long," he entreated: and there was hope and joy and new life in his tone.

"About ten minutes. If you don't mind waiting about for a bit, I'll join you then."

He did "wait about," for such a considerably longer "bit" than the ten minutes named, that he was a trifle restless and impatient when at last she did appear. She tripped down as unconcernedly as possible, however, with a letter in her hand.

"Oh! it was *that* kept you," said he, casting a wrathful glance at the letter. "To whom were you writing?"

Miss Charteris raised her brows, and then looked amused. "What a singularly rude question," she said.

He coloured. "Was it rude? Why?"

"For the simple reason that I might not care to tell you."

"Why should you not care?"

To this she made no answer beyond a little swift glance as she moved towards the post bag that lay on a side table. By some accident her hand brushed against the heavy fronds of a large fern, and the letter fell to the ground, address uppermost.

It was quite impossible that he could prevent himself from seeing it. The writing was singularly large and legible for a woman, and

The Hon. George Markham,
The Albany,
London,

was so clear that it might have been print of a good type. His face

was as dark as night as he picked it up and returned it to Miss Charteris.

"It wasn't my fault," he said.

"Certainly not. It was my awkwardness. Still, as you know, it is an ill-wind that blows nobody good, and — you have had your curiosity gratified." She was a little flushed as she spoke—a fact that Elston saw and dwelt upon.

"I have seen what I had no desire to see," he answered, stiffly.

"Well, why *shouldn't* I write to George?" she asked, a touch of defiance in her tone. "He is a very old friend." She was a little put out by the whole affair.

"Why, indeed? I am bound, of course, to remember that he was first in the field."

"Oh! If you put it that way!" she said. She turned sharply away, and then as suddenly stopped. "I suppose," indignantly, "you think I ought to open that letter and show you the contents."

"I do," returned he, boldly.

"You suspect me, then?"

"I should certainly like to see what you have written to Markham. You call him an old friend, but you must acknowledge he was rather more than that to you a year ago."

"Not more to me—whatever I may have been to him." She paused, and then throwing up her head, regarded him fixedly. "You remember our compact of a while since?" she asked. "Such a *little* while. A bare half-hour, I think. You remember it?"

He paled perceptibly.

"Is *this* jealousy?" she said.

"You spoke of jealousy without reason. Am I now unreasonable? Have you proved me so?"

"Have you proved that you are *not* so? How do you know what this letter contains. There is such a thing as Time, *that* will prove which of us is right."

There was scorn in her glance as she looked at him and threw down her racket upon a hall chair.

"A week!" she said, bitterly. "I should have made it a *day!* Already—though but a few minutes have passed—you have transgressed once."

She cast one last reproachful glance at him, which betrayed the fact of her eyes being full of tears, and then left him.

Although totally unconvinced and inwardly raging against George Markham, fear of Sophy's displeasure had such a hold on Lord Elston, that he determined to subdue himself and give her no further cause for anger. Whatever happened, whatever she might choose to do, he would be blind and deaf to it until this momentous week was at an end. Once his, he thought, all would be right. During the evening, therefore, he so managed to conduct himself that Miss Charteris, outwardly at least, forgave him.

The next day brought an influx of visitors for the private theatricals impending, and in which Sophy was to bear a principal part. Elston, having no talent that way, was, of course, shut out from the frequent rehearsals that, after the arrival of the last contingent, went on morning, noon and night. He certainly objected to the absorption of Sophy's time, but he was still so careful to avoid a second offence, that he pretended a deep interest in the play, which secretly was a thing of detestation to him.

Amongst the actors there was a tall, angular young man, with a glowing eye, a Roman nose and a tragic expression. This latter was perhaps born of a belief in his own histrionic powers, and the opinion of a few friends of his that he was the very image of Mr. Irving. He was, at all events, the leading spirit of the theatricals that just then possessed the guests at Hartley Court. His manner was impressive, and he had acquired a trick of taking people aside into corners and recesses, behind screens and palms, and there whispering to them in a solemn, earnest fashion that precluded the idea of frivolity.

By degrees it became noticeable that it was generally Miss Charteris who was drawn by him behind the Japanese screens and branching palms. But as the mysterious conferences were presumably about the play in which she was to take the principal rôle, and as she seemed to bear up wonderfully under the infliction of these repeated interviews, no one felt called upon to go to her rescue. Lord Elston writhed beneath it all, yet made no sign. For two whole days indeed he suffered torments, betraying no temper, and putting in rather mechanical smiles in the right places; but on the third day an event occurred that destroyed his newly-formed resolves to endure all things, rather than again show himself distrustful of his lady-love.

On the top of the small hill at the very end of the fruit garden, a glass house had been built that was specially dedicated to pelargoniums. It was rather far from the house and, therefore, seldom visited by any people staying at Hartley; but Elston, who was fond of this particular flower, strolled up sometimes to look at them, although it was growing towards the end of July, and their first loveliness was almost at an end. It was the Monday following that eventful Thursday, on which Miss Charteris had put him on his trial, that he went up to the pelargonium house to try and while away the time until he could hope again to see Sophy. Ever since these wretched amateurs had descended upon the house, she had been conspicuous by her absence from eleven to luncheon—studying her part in her own room, as Lord Elston fondly, if erroneously, believed.

At some distance from it, but on a line with the eastern end of the glass house, ran a hedge of laurel sufficiently thick to conceal the approach of any one coming from that side. Elston, walking leisurely towards it, became all at once conscious that a voice—*the* voice indeed in all the world for him—was sounding somewhere near. He

looked through a large hole in the hedge and discovered that Miss Charteris was in the house—the door of which was open—and that she was not alone! The tragic young man was with her!

With her? Inadequate explanation! He was on his knees to her!

Elston felt his colour forsake him; his breath come and go with difficulty; his limbs tremble beneath him—as he took in the fatal scene. Yes! There he was, kneeling before her, a whole world of despairing love in his eloquent eyes, now more aglow than ever. He was holding her hand in both of his in quite a frenzied fashion, and, even as Elston gazed, spellbound, he proceeded to devour it with kisses!

Ah, she! perfidious girl! How did she receive his insolent advances? With the withering scorn they deserved? With a gesture of hatred and aversion? No! She turned her head coyly to one side and permitted him without rebuke to press the lovely hand upon which he—Elston—only a minute since had been tenderly dwelling, as upon a priceless treasure that yet some day might be his. There was a curious expression, too, upon her false face, as though she were waiting with a girlish bashfulness for a word from him that should decide her fate.

It came at last. Not one, but many words in a very torrent of wild entreaty.

"My beloved! My most adored one!" cried he, in tones loud and clear; remarkably so indeed—no doubt on account of the intensity of his emotion. "Do not consign me to despair—and an early grave. A single word of hope is all I dare demand. Grant it, ere I perish. To-morrow will see me over the border: let me take with me into my enforced exile one smile, one blessed assurance that you are not altogether indifferent to me!"

He waited her reply in apparently breathless suspense. So did Elston. Slowly—very slowly, she pressed her handkerchief to her averted face.

"If I only dared believe you would be true," she faltered, very distinctly.

Elston stayed to hear no more. Stricken, crushed by this perfidy, in one he had esteemed so highly, he turned his steps backward and went blindly down the path by which he had ascended—to his doom. He scarce knew whither he went. On and on he walked through the shady garden, until at last he came to a high stone wall—only recognising that, indeed, when his nose came nearly in contact with it. He could not go through it and it was impossible to climb it, so perforce he pulled himself up and began to retrace his steps. This he did, still in a blind fury of rage and grief, that burst into open flame as a turn in a path brought him suddenly face to face with Sophy.

She was coming towards him and was singing—actually *singing*—in a blithe, sweet, careless way, a new ballad that had taken her fancy of

late. With one hand she was holding up her gown—in the other was a big red rose that she was swinging lightly to and fro. She looked like one who was without a care in the world—or a regret—or a remorse. One could see her dainty feet in their Parisian shoes and hear the click-clack of the high heels, as she tripped down the little hilly pathway. She seemed indeed at the moment the very incarnation of all sweetness and light. When she saw Elston she stopped singing and smiled instead.

"You here! And at this hour!" cried she. "Traitor! Have you found me out then?" Such hardihood! Such effrontery.

"Yes. And in time," returned he, standing still and gazing at her with concentrated wrath on his pale face. Then his anger burst all bounds. "How do you *dare* to speak to me?" he said in a low but terrible tone. Miss Charteris drew back.

"What on earth has happened? Are you mad?" she said.

"Sane rather—*at last.* This morning I was mad indeed. Then, I believed in you. Now——" He threw out his hand with a gesture that would have done credit to the tragic young man himself. "Now—*I know all.*"

"It seems to be a good deal," remarked Miss Charteris composedly, though her face had lost its colour. "It is also evidently of much interest. May I hear it?"

"This persistent deception is unworthy—nay, rather, *worthy* of you," cried he, bitterly. "Learn then that just now I saw you and—and that mountebank in the glass house above."

"I don't know any mountebank. I am therefore more at sea than ever." As she said this in her iciest tones, his lordship regarded her with undisguised disdain.

"You know one at all events," he said. "His name is Pelham." Then his rage broke forth again. "I tell you I saw him on his knees to you—swearing, protesting, how he loved you; whilst you—*you*—listened to him, you encouraged him. I did not wait for the end, but your manner left me no doubt that you accepted him."

Miss Charteris struggled with herself for a moment and then burst out laughing. There was a good deal of irrepressible amusement in this laughter, but there was more anger.

"I see," she said. "And so you think you surprised Captain Pelham making love to me? Now listen——" she dropped her rose, and drawing a little paper volume from her pocket, opened it with much deliberation at a certain page, and began to read out aloud:

"My beloved! My most adored one! Do not consign me to despair——" and so on to the end of what he had heard behind the laurel hedge. As she proceeded, his face changed. First it grew blank, then crimson. Then a wild hope sprang into it that had to do battle with a great shame. When Miss Charteris had finished to the last word, she paused, folded the play with irritating precision, and returned it to her pocket.

"You have done me and Captain Pelham much honour," she said, coolly. "It is certain that in *your* eyes at least, we shall pass muster as very tolerable actors." She swept by him as she spoke and went on her way to the gate beyond, cruelly unconcerned in manner. She even took up and continued the song she had been singing, from the very part where she had broken off. She was in no wise disconcerted or put out. This indifference was terrible.

He hurried after her and caught her up just under the hanging ivy of the gateway.

"One word," he entreated, miserably. "You gave me three chances. You remember that?"

"Yes. I also remember that two of them are at an end."

"Oh, no. That first one, it has not been *proved* unreasonable."

"I told you not to depend too much on that. On Thursday next you shall *see* that objectionable letter." She would barely look at him, and his heart sank. If she could show him that letter, there must indeed have been nothing in it to justify his jealousy! Still there was one more chance left him. He took courage.

"You blame me," he said, in a low voice. "But you might know that if I did not love you as I do, you would not have to blame me. I pray you to remember that."

She made him no answer to this, beyond a swift glance he found it difficult to translate; and a moment later she had passed through the little ivied gate into the flower-garden beyond, and he had not then the courage to follow her.

He stayed behind, therefore, and upbraided himself fiercely. He took himself to task in a shower of genuine abuse. He absented himself from luncheon; and at dinner it took him quite a little time to make up his mind about even glancing at her when he found her on his other side. He did manage it, however, and looked so long, that she was at length obliged to notice him. After that, touched perhaps by the unhappiness of his eyes, she softened towards him, and to his intense surprise and gratitude was considerably kinder than he deserved.

The next day went smoothly, without a single hitch; and if at eleven o'clock he winced inwardly as he thought of the two who were then in all probability amongst the pelargoniums, he was very careful not to betray it. He was happier, too, in spite of all this than he had been for some time. Miss Charteris towards evening grew very nearly her old sweet self again. Nay, more than that. It seemed to Elston that she was softer, tenderer in her manner to him than she had ever been before; that her eyes rested on his with a more lingering regard; and once, when he unexpectedly turned his glance in her direction, he caught her looking at him, and surprised the vivid blush with which she turned aside.

His hopes rose high, and he came downstairs next morning, Wednesday, happy in the knowledge that only one more day lay between him and the fulfilment of his fondest desire. Certainly that third sin

should not find him out, for the simple reason that he would not commit it. He would be calm, circumspect. It was, indeed, impossible that he should ever feel jealousy about her again.

It was perhaps a little shock to him to find George Markham at breakfast when he got down. He had arrived by an early train, and as Elston entered the room, was just saying "How d'ye do" to Miss Charteris. She was a girl who spoke very distinctly, and Elston could hear what she was saying. She was smiling in very friendly wise at Markham, though her manner was suspiciously reproachful.

"I thought you were never coming," she said. "How you put it off from day to day. And when you *knew* why I wanted you." After that, she and Markham entered into, and were apparently lost in, an engrossing discussion that lasted until breakfast, a rather prolonged meal at Hartley, was at an end.

Lord Elston could not forget that once this man had been Sophy's avowed lover. He had, indeed, according to all accounts, been her devoted slave. He looked uncommonly like a slave still —following her about and giving himself up to her, as it were, for the entire morning. Pelham, in spite of his expression and tragic powers, was nowhere. Markham monopolised her all through, getting her to show him the new fish-pond and tennis court and otherwise making himself specially disagreeable.

Miss Charteris, however, did not seem to find him disagreeable at all. She seemed, on the whole, very glad to be with him. She introduced him to Elston with quite a little flow of pleasure in her manner, and said ecstatically that it was "very nice to see two old friends of hers with each other." This was putting Markham in the same category with himself—when surely *he*, Elston, was more than a friend.

Feeling rather disconsolate after luncheon, he broke away from one or two of the other guests, who wanted him to join them in a long drive to some distant abbey, and, lighting a cigarette, wandered into one of the conservatories. Sophy, he had discovered, was not going to this abbey, neither was Markham—a fact in itself suspicious. He was feeling distinctly gloomy as he stepped into the region of flowers, and, without giving a thought to their beauty, paced slowly up and down. It was at his second turn that his eyes, moodily lowered to the ground, fell upon an object that instantly riveted all his attention.

A letter, wide open, and written in a large, sprawling hand. The beginning was at the other side, of course, but what now caught his eye was enough.

"a moment sooner. Hurried my best. But those lawyer fellows are impossible to move. I will bring the ring, but only hope it isn't too large. It looks enormous. However, as it is my first purchase of the kind, you must forgive me if I have erred in any way. Ever, dear Sophy, yours, G. Markham."

The writing was so large that he read it from where ne stood. He read it unconsciously. His eyes had fallen upon it and, before he was aware of it, the sense of the words had entered into his brain. What was he to do now! He was a little frightened at the strange feeling that took possession of him. It was not rage, or grief, or disappointment. It was something far worse than all. He hardly realised at first that it was despair.

"Lawyers." He wondered dimly if it were her marriage settlement they were so slow about. "His first purchase of the kind." Very natural. It isn't every day a man buys a wedding-ring. He hadn't a doubt in his mind but that it was a wedding-ring to be placed on Sophy's finger by Markham.

He was not angry *this* time. He was only cold and stunned. For the first time in all his life he was entirely without hope. He wondered in a dull sort of way that he had never until now discovered how much Sophy was to him.

He was still staring at the cruel letter, though with eyes that saw not, when Sophy herself entered the conservatory. Of course she saw the letter, and instantly stooped to pick it up.

"I seem to be dropping my possessions all over the place," she said. "My Syrian bangle in the garden half an hour a—Good gracious! What is the matter *now?*" She had caught a glimpse of Elston's face, and it electrified her. Indeed it made a picture.

"Don't let us go into it, Sophy," he said, brokenly. "Why should I distress you? It was all my own folly from first to last, I dare say. I should have seen—have known ——"

"But *what?*" demanded she, as he paused; he felt indeed unequal to going on, and looked so altogether strange and downhearted that Miss Charteris was unnerved. "What is it? Tell," she said. He pointed to the letter she still held in her hand.

"If you had only told me," he cried. "Oh, Sophy! was it then so great an amusement to you to break my heart!"

"To break ——" She gazed at him, lost in perplexity. Vaguely her eyes wandered to the letter, the word "ring" caught her eye; in a moment the whole truth flashed upon her. A warm crimson sprang to her cheek, and I regret to say she so far forgot herself as to stamp her pretty shoe upon the tesselated pavement.

"You are really *maddening!*" she cried. "You are beyond pardon." She might, and in all probability would, have said a great deal more, had not the sound of an approaching footstep checked her. She turned her head to see George Markham.

"George," she said, sweetly, with a complete change of tone and expression. "Would you mind bringing me that—that little message I wrote to you about last Thursday. Bring it *here.* Lady Hartley has it, I think. Get it from her."

"Oh, the ring," said Mr. Markham; and he went back again the way he had come, whistling idly. Miss Charteris, in his absence,

employed herself thrumming in a rather vicious manner upon the pane nearest to her. She did not look at Elston, who was deadly silent, with an awful growing fear full upon him that he had been for the third, and fatal time, mistaken!

Presently Markham returned and laid something in her hand.

"I had a battle royal to get it," he said, laughing. "It appears baby lives by it alone. It is a huge success, Lady Hartley says, 'an you love her, don't keep it long.'"

Still laughing, he lounged away, through the outer door, down the steps and into the garden. When he was quite gone, Sophy advanced on Lord Elston. She then opened her pretty pink palm and held it out to him. A curious object lay on it.

"There is *the ring!*" she said, in a voice untranslatable.

It was a terrible thing. A hateful wormy sort of thing, made of gutta-percha; but if hideous, at least innocent—innocent, no doubt, *because* hideous. It was black and soft and bendable, and big enough to fit a giant's thumb. Elston gazed at it as if fascinated, and at last, in spite of the pride that would have held him silent, was constrained to speak.

"What is it?"

"Baby's teething-ring," returned she, slowly. When she had proved to him his guilt, she did not try to leave him, but stood erect, her beautiful figure drawn up to its fullest height, a strange gravity upon her beautiful lips.

"This is the third time," she said, at last, in a low tone, as though speaking to herself. He started violently. Noticing this, she let her eyes rest more fully on him and went on slowly, "Your probation, my Lord, is at an end."

"So is my life," said he.

"As for that first chance—that letter of mine—you shall see it now, as I promised."

"Oh! no, no," he said, entreating her by a gesture not to go into that. "I understand. I submit. I am surely unfortunate enough."

She hesitated for a moment and then said:

"You remember our compact?"

"And all it means to me. Have I not told you so? Spare me, I beseech you, what you can."

"This is the final throw and you have lost."

"Everything?"

"All is over, then, between us?"

"All!"

She made a little impetuous movement, and he, interpreting it, moved to the door and flung it wide for her to pass through. With her would go all his hopes, his desires. Nothing would remain save that saddest of all things, memory.

He stood, his eyes downcast, waiting for her to go. He felt numbed, stupid; but presently it *did* dawn upon him that it was

strange she should keep him so long in attendance on her. Whilst he thus mused, a voice, soft, sweet, unsteady, fell upon his ears.

"Arthur!" it said.

He let the door go and looked at her. She had covered her face with her hands and was crying quietly but bitterly. In a second she was in his arms.

"My darling! my darling!" whispered he. "Has it hurt you so much? Has it so grieved you? Oh, Sophy, do not cry like that! In time you will forget all this and—me."

"Ah! that is just it," sobbed Miss Charteris, indignantly; "I can't forget you. And to think you would have let me go *for ever*, without another word—another glance—oh, I would not have *believed* it of you!"

"Sophy, do you know what you are saying? After *all*, is there a chance for me?"

He was very pale as he looked at her.

"Yes, a fourth," said she, smiling through her tears. "And then—oh, no," she cried, nervously, "we won't have any more trials; I hate them. But—but you *will* try to be good now, won't you?"

"I don't think I shall ever offend you again, Sophy; I don't, indeed."

"Very well," said she. "That is a promise, mind; and now I must run away and give back this ring to Lady Hartley."

"Ah! talking of rings," said he, a little awkwardly; "there—there is something I want to say to you. On Thursday last I was so *sure* I should not fall into disgrace that I telegraphed to town, and," fumbling in his pocket, "got you this. You will wear it now, Sophy?"

"*This*" was a very exquisite ring, altogether different from that horrid black thing which had wrought such mischief.

"Oh! how lovely!" cried Miss Charteris, who was not above raptures where diamonds were concerned. "Oh, Arthur, *thank* you!"

He slipped it on her finger—*the* finger—and she regarded it with most satisfactory delight.

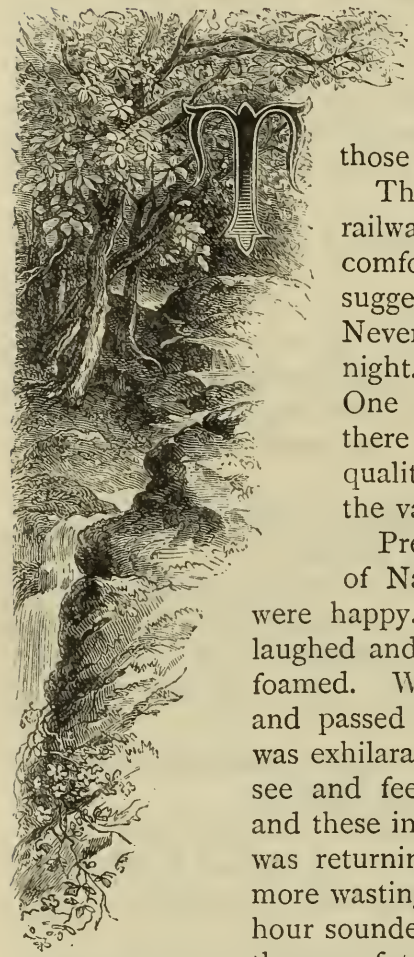
"It is I who should thank you," said he, tenderly, "for deigning to accept it. But—but if I were to thank a person, Sophy, I should do it more warmly than you."

She cast a little, swift, shy glance at him and blushed crimson. She hesitated, then moved a step nearer to him, and lifted her face slightly.

It was their first kiss, but not their last.

UNDER NORTHERN SKIES.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," &c.



THERE came a day when we said a last good-bye to Stockholm and turned our faces towards our beloved Norway. We felt almost as those who are going home.

The train left in the evening, and the railway company did nothing to add to the comfort of the night journey. The very suggestion of sleeping-cars irritated them. Nevertheless, "the day waiteth for the night." Morning broke and the sun rose. One began to revive. Buffets here and there were open; steaming coffee, of a quality found only in Norway, chased away the vapours of depression.

Presently a change came over the face of Nature. We breathed Norway air, and were happy. Mountains uprose, hills and valleys laughed and sang, rivers and torrents frothed and foamed. We had left the tame and commonplace, and passed into the majestic and stupendous. It was exhilarating as a draught of wine. Yet we all see and feel things from our own point of view, and these influences were less apparent to E., who was returning to work: close reading by day and more wasting of the midnight oil. But before that hour sounded, we had still many days of delight in the near future.

Christiania at last. One never returns to it without feeling that it is wonderfully favoured. When the old kings removed their capital from Bergen they did well.

Yet Bergen itself is hardly less favoured, and at a first glance is more picturesque. The hills rise about it with greater effect. Red-roofed houses, standing out in vivid contrast with the green hill slopes, arrest the eye and take captive all one's artistic fancy. The harbour running up into the town, under the hill shadows, is always full of life and animation. The quaint old castle, with its white-washed walls, looks on with grave silence; the silence and apathy of age, the melancholy of a dead and gone existence in the midst of a surrounding life that is ever fresh and young and abundant.

The interest of Christiania is more diffused, and lies in its neighbourhood, its drives and water excursions. From the heights of Frognersæter you seem to command the world.

Christiania lies sleeping in the sunshine. The waters of lake and fjord are beautiful as a dream, calm as a mirror. They divide into two wide channels, one of which, leading to the sea, conducts you, sadly enough when your time comes, to the shores of old England. If you could find it in your heart to be unpatriotic, you would exclaim with Ole Vig:

> "Gamle Norge,
> Med Klippe borge,
> Mig huer bedst."

The surrounding country seems boundless as the sea.

The view closes with far-off mountains, mingling with cloudland. The snow mountains of Thelemarken can be traced—the Gausta-fjeld in the distance, the highest summit towering peak-like above all others, and seldom free from mist.

A little to the north are the mountains of Valders, that beautiful and romantic district of Norway, which remains in our memory as a vision. A dream of wonderful roads lying amidst hills and valleys, of innumerable small waterfalls enlivening the hill-sides and helping to swell the rush and roar of river torrents.

A dream of pine forests and the smell of the fir cones, and the delicious lights and shadows of a sunny summer's day.

A dream of a race with time and a dark night's drive, through dense woods peopled with imaginary assassins: a glorious moon round as a shield that rose above the woods and the hills, and flooded our path with silvery light and ghostly shadows: an evening star, large as a small moon, that hung suspended in the dark blue ether, beautiful as no star we had ever seen.

A dream—more dream-like than all—of a beautiful maiden who moved softly, whose voice was music and whose smile was heaven. Who took compassion upon us in the dead of night, and made us coffee, looking as romantic and ethereal as a Senta ready for Sacrifice. Then sent us on our way by a steadfast gaze from those pure eyes, when—who knows?—we might have counted the world well lost for their sake. Such things have been. And this dream was all a living reality. Eight years have passed since then, and many a visit to old Norway, but its impression is vivid as the events of yesterday.

We had again come to Christiania in this Year of Grace 1885, but not to remain there. The capital was powerless to detain us when the beauties of the country were ours to revel in. On this occasion the object of our desires was the Rjukenfos, one of the great waterfalls of Norway.

We left Christiania early one morning. Our first day's stage would end at Kongsberg. The railway district is beautiful from first to last.

On the Way to the Rjuken.

The train moves on into the interior amidst one of the fairest and most fertile spots of Norway, which, as a rule, delights in the wild, the grand and the rugged, rather than the soft and cultivated.

We approached Drammen, one of Norway's most strikingly situated towns. The fjord spread wide its surface.

The train rumbled over the railway bridge spanning the waters of Drammen. Beyond them was a plain bounded by hills. Upon the fjord were barges laden with timber—the great trade of the neighbourhood. Most of it is bound for England and Holland.

Not long since, strolling down the harbour side, between Great Yarmouth and Gorleston we came upon a huge pile of this timber, bearing the Drammen mark. A Norwegian bark at anchor, having discharged her cargo, was ready to depart again. We longed to board her and make friends with her crew: strong, fresh-looking Norwegians. But we had no language in common. It is said that a hundred years hence we shall so have advanced and developed as to be able to communicate thought one to another without speech. That time has not yet come, and we have to make the best of our limited capacities.

On the instant this vessel and pile of timber brought back all the old, well-loved, unfading picture. At once we were at Drammen in spirit, gazing upon the calm wide waters of the fjord, with all their sky reflections. Timber-laden barges and vessels, large enough to brave the perils of the sea, moved to and fro.

All this we saw to-day, not in spirit but in fact, as the train glided on to the station. The town is flourishing and given up to commerce. Innumerable saw-mills deliciously scented the air with pine wood and fir cones. Everywhere may be heard the swish of the steel making its way through the timber.

At Kongsberg we found the landlord of the Hotel Victoria: an old acquaintance, for this was by no means our first visit to the old town. He was still, as we had always found him, one of the most attentive hosts in Norway, and his house one of the best arranged in or out of Christiania. We were at once greeted with a pleasant surprise, in itself a welcome. The utmost resources of the hotel were from that moment at our disposal.

Our host had come to meet a Frenchman, who afterwards proved himself, if so strong an expression may be permitted, an unmitigated nuisance. He was perfectly irrepressible, with an amount of conceit and self-satisfaction that nothing could approach. He followed in your footsteps and fastened himself upon you with the persistency of a familiar. He never ceased talking for half a minute during the day, and we wondered if he went on talking in his sleep at night.

Perhaps the most objectionable thing about him was his voice. Pitched in shrill tones, it knew no softness or modulation, but wherever he happened to be, in a room or in the open air, it might at all times have been heard above the noise of rushing waters. Head

and ears ached, nerves thrilled and vibrated; one felt that this must certainly end in suicide or murder. Finally, he was in the habit of doing the rudest things in the coollest manner, and begging your pardon in the politest possible way.

We knew him again in a moment. We had met him the previous year at Penmaenmawr, had spent part of an evening with him in the drawing-room at the hotel. His time and attention had then been given to two pretty girls, with whom he was carrying on a heavy flirtation after the manner of his class. Every other word had been praise of himself, and all his efforts were directed into drawing compliments from them. In this he did not succeed, whilst the girls, enjoying the opportunity, constantly mystified him, and occasionally paid him a compliment which could be taken in a very opposite sense.

"My dears," said the mother, after he had left the room, "you were rather hard upon the man. He is ridiculously conceited, but you must remember that he is a Frenchman, and has the faults of his nation."

Here we mentally differed from the speaker, not without authority; for amongst the sons of France, land of our home and birth, we have found some of the best and worthiest of companions, most enduring of friendships. The Frenchman under discussion was not a true type of his nation.

"It was irresistible," laughed one of the pretty girls, in the most good-natured way possible. "Though he spoke English so well, he never once saw that we were only making fun of him."

He had left early the next morning, and here, in this narrow world, we had met again in Kongsberg. He was good enough to inform us that our face haunted and puzzled him, and we allowed it to do so without bringing back North Wales to his memory.

At Kongsberg we had done with the railway. The rest of our journey would be by carriole, with the exception of the passage down the Tinesjö, in the little steamer. The excursion would take three days, and at Kongsberg it was necessary to hire carrioles for Tinoset, on the borders of the lake, a drive of ten hours from Kongsberg. At Tinoset they would await our return on the third day.

The landlord of the Victoria Hotel arranged everything very comfortably. Luckily a carriole will only hold one person, or the Frenchman, also bound for the Rjukenfos, would have fastened himself upon us. As it was, he proved a great hindrance on the road; until getting down to examine the construction of a bridge, we finally outstripped him and kept ahead of him as far as Bolkesjö, where one stopped for lunch and to rest the horses.

It was necessary to leave Kongsberg very early in the morning, in order to catch the steamer from Tinoset, and we were on the road whilst the day was yet grey. Alas, it was very grey, and at times showers came down with a force that staggered our little horses and almost

overturned our carrioles. But we had a capital skydsgut. The man was altogether an exception to his class and drove so fast that we reached Tinoset a full hour before the usual time.

There are several ways of reaching Tinoset. By Bolkesjö is the nearest and most picturesque. By Hitterdal you pass through much that is wild and rugged in Thelemarken, including one of the oldest wooden churches and greatest curiosities in Norway. This we had already seen on previous occasions, and to-day chose the road viâ Bolkesjö.

The Frenchman comfortably settled that we should all return viâ Hitterdal. He had not seen the church and district. We had, but he considered the privilege of accompanying him sufficient to repay us for the extra two hours' journey. We said nothing, but perhaps thought and planned the more.

So we started in the grey morning. Under ordinary circumstances, with blue sky and sunshine, it would have been a very delightful drive. Even in spite of clouds and occasional showers that seemed the beginning of another deluge, it was more than pleasant. The little horses were strong and willing, and thought nothing of the ten hours' work before them. E. and I had one skydsgut between us.

The drive was a long one, with only one stage on the road: Bolkesjö. The road lay amidst mountains near and far off; chains of hills in every direction. There were great plains about us, and a running river, and frequent forests. Here and there we passed a farm-house, surrounded by a cherry orchard, but these were few and far between. As a rule, for mile after mile, no house or tenement was to be seen.

We entered dense forests and climbed steep hills, which the horses took bravely. In the intervals of sunshine the rain-drops on the trees sparkled like diamonds, and shadows fell athwart our path, the scent of the pines came out, and the air blew fresh and invigorating.

So well did our post-boy urge on the horses that we reached Bolkesjö long before the appointed time; yet they were as fresh and frisky as when we had left Kongsberg. At Bolkesjö we were supposed to halt two hours. There was every inducement to do so. The inn or station was quite civilised, and we had it to ourselves.

But the great charm of Bolkesjö is its view. From the station you look down upon one of the most wonderful valleys in Europe. Here you are about 1,300 feet above the level of the sea, and gazing into the valley is almost like gazing into another world. Every description of scenery is here, from the wild and majestic to the soft and sleeping. Two lakes repose here, one much below the level of the other. The mountains of Thelemarken, some of the wildest in Norway, are everywhere visible, surrounding the plain. Chains divide as if to let you out into the world, and their valleys and passes are enlivened by rushing waters.

There are few views in Norway to surpass this, perhaps even to

equal it. During part of our stay the sun was good enough to come out, and the clouds flying across the sky threw sweeping shadows upon the landscape. They rolled over the plain and over the mountain sides, and lost themselves in the world beyond.

When our time was up and everyone had sufficiently rested, we started again on our journey. The Frenchman once more contrived to take the lead, and we gave him five minutes' start. We saw him far away down the long winding road and thought we had placed leagues between us. Not at all.

Just outside Bolkesjö, we came to a quaint old Thelemarken house. Our skydsgut intimated that it was worth inspecting. The owner, substantial and smiling, stood in his doorway and seemed to second the proposition. We got down and entered, and the old man bid us welcome in true hospitable fashion. The skydsgut informed us afterwards that he was quite rich, and allowed his little house to be seen out of pure philanthropy. Its old-fashioned furniture, old plates and corner cupboards, and old windows would have delighted an artist and made a splendid picture. The old man was delighted at our admiration, and we were giving a parting ecstasy, when a shrill voice made itself heard in the doorway, and a shadow turned light to darkness. "Ah ha!" it shrieked; "I thought there was something to be seen here. I saw you get down, and turned back."

But our inspection was over and his had only begun. So we mounted, took the lead and kept it for ever after. We had been at Tinoset quite three-quarters of an hour when the Frenchman came carrioling up the road, the picture of anything but amiability. "I never caught you up," he shouted, as soon as he saw us on the upper balcony, where we were taking coffee. "I could not get my horse to go. How did you manage?"

We had reached Tinoset long before our time. The station was close to the lake, and the small boat was now getting up steam at the landing-stage. It was supposed to start at six o'clock. The inn was full of people. Every room seemed crowded. It is unreasonable to resent such a state of things, as if it were a personal injury, and yet one does so invariably. Certainly here, and this evening, it was especially uncomfortable.

As the day went on, the weather had not improved. The clouds had lowered and rain was more frequent. An icy wind blew off the lake. We shivered at the prospect before us—two hours and more on that boat, without a cabin, with only an awning overhead, the wind and the rain beating down fiercely between the mountains, no protection but thin mackintoshes already wet through. It was not a cheerful look-out. This was seeking pleasure under difficulties.

It took a great deal of coffee this time to chase away the vapours of depression, but they yielded at last. Bright ideas began to flow.

We laid siege to the womenkind of the station, and bribed them to lend us plaids. One of them brought her best Sunday shawl

IN QUIET WAYS.

wrapped up in thin paper and lavender. She took it out, looked at it affectionately, and finally handed it to us with a sigh and a smile.

"Do you think you will spoil it?" she said, looking at the skies that just then were weeping again.

We faithfully promised to restore its value fourfold if we did so. It was a true act of generosity and heroism. Of faith also in human nature, for we departed and were not compelled to return that way. Nor did she do it in the hope of gain, for when we did return she took back her plaid and ran off laughing, without waiting for any reward for her goodness. But we caught her up and paid our debt, though the obligation was not to be cancelled.

The boat started at last with a small crowd on board. But for our borrowed plumes—or plaids—we should probably have died of cold: indirectly, if not at once. The lake is long and narrow. The mountains rise abruptly on either hand. The rain beat down upon our awning, and the wind found out the weak joints in our armour. It was impossible to pretend to enjoy the journey, or to raise ecstasies at deep waters and frowning hills. We only longed for the end.

Our destination was Strand, at the other end of the lake. We devoutly hoped it was a large station, with plenty of house-room and an abundant larder. This crowd on board was only a portion of what we should have to encounter.

The shades of evening deepened, and with chattering teeth but thankful hearts, we landed at Strand. It was evidently a lovely spot, but we had no place for raptures to-night; they would keep till morning.

There was the usual Norwegian stampede. Everyone rushed and scrambled and tried to be first at the inn. It was only a few yards from the landing-stage. We took things leisurely, and, on reaching the inn, quietly went upstairs.

Down below, the Babel was unearthly. Everyone talked at once, and everyone wanted the very same thing at the very same moment. To do most of them justice, they did not care how they were lodged for the night; any number in the smallest amount of space. We knew our danger in this respect, came across a handmaiden and despatched her for the landlady. Up she came, breathless and bewildered, but so obliging that in two minutes she was ready to perform sacrifices for us.

We had found out a capital room with three beds in it. Possession is nine points of the law, and we offered to pay for the third bed, provided it was not occupied. "I am driven to my wits' ends," said the landlady; "but if you want the room you shall have it, and I should not think of charging you for the empty bed. The others must manage how they can; they drive me wild with their noise and impatience."

At this moment up came the Frenchman, noisiest of all. He looked round. "Three beds," said he. "The very thing. This

will do for us," to the landlady. "I have not the slightest objection to sharing your room," he added, turning to us.

Endurance has its limits. We quietly assured him that we had an objection, and that our room was not to be shared by anyone. He was silent from sheer astonishment. We profited by the occasion, locked the door and went off with the key. We found before long that the landlord had a second house a hundred yards off, with any number of beds, every one of them unoccupied. This crowding into rooms was nothing but the favourite Norwegian system of cramming people together. To the empty house the Frenchman betook himself later on, and he had by far the best of it. He was free of the whole place and, if it pleased him, could make night hideous with noises without disturbing the world.

Dinner—or supper—that night was a Barmecide's feast. Everyone was locked out of the dining-room, to begin with. The adjoining room was small and crowded. One could hardly move or breathe, whilst the Babel never ceased. Wandering round by a mysterious passage we came across the landlady, who smuggled us into the empty dining-room. Here we had comparative rest and repose, though the outside roar came through the doorway, and impatient hands kept knocking to know when supper would be ready. Not the slightest attention was paid to these anxious inquirers by the bustling hostess and her handmaidens.

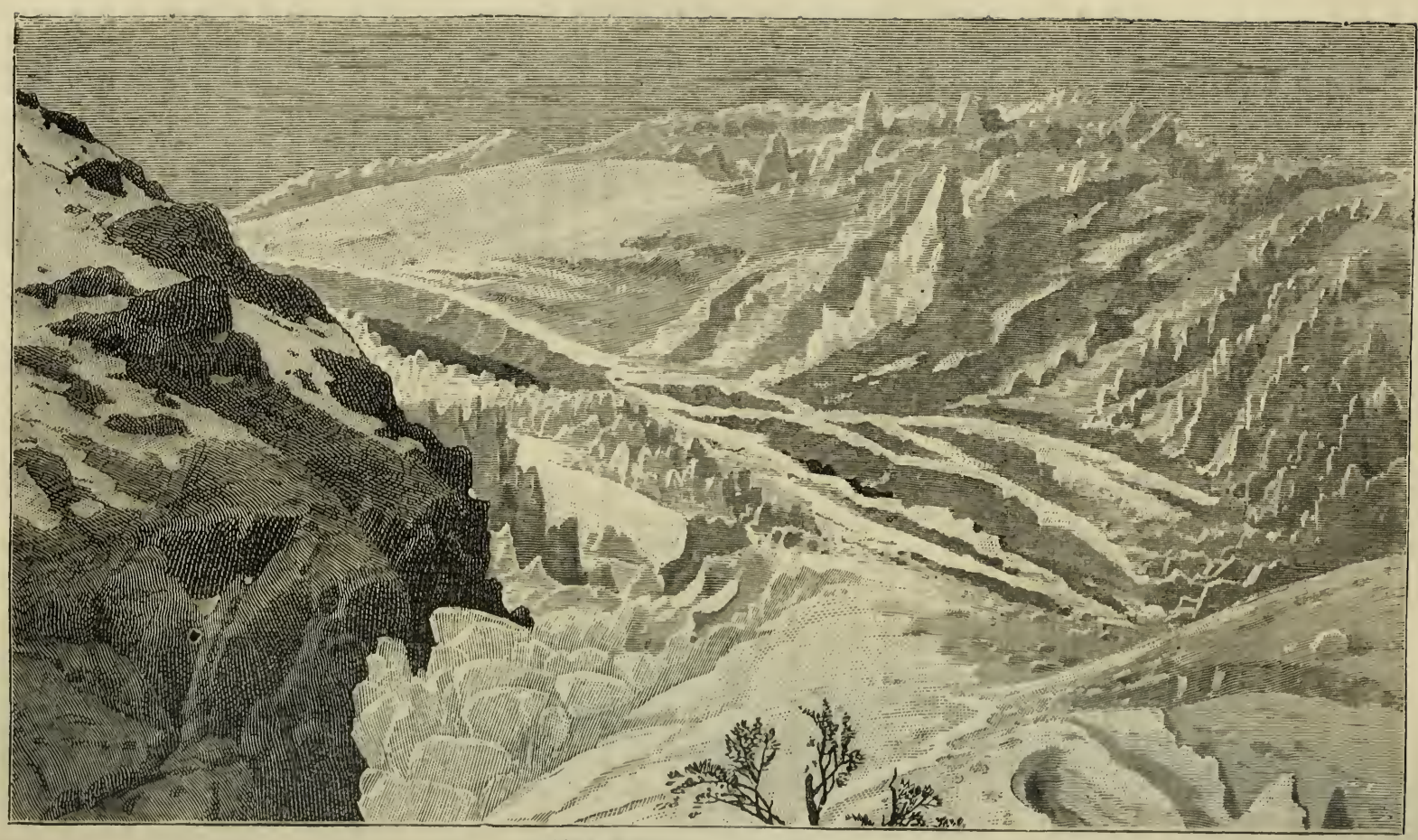
But presently a Philistine found out the back way to the dining-room, entered, glared at us, unlocked the door, and the crowd rushed in pêle-mêle. In bounced the hostess, frantic and furious. "If you don't every one of you go out," she cried, "not one atom of supper shall you see to-night. Do you think that I am going to be defied like this in my own house? Out with you, every one!"

"Then why do you let in the Englishmen?" cried the discontented author of the mischief, pointing to us, who were quietly deep in our books.

"You let the Englishmen alone," retorted our delightful hostess. "I am mistress in this house, and if I choose to have them here, what is that to you? They are not in my way and they are out of yours. And now, away with you!"

Upon this there was a general exit. The door was once more locked, and to make assurance doubly sure, the key was taken out. Our hostess, all smiles, turned to us. "Pay no attention to them," she said, "and my rage is all put on; but if I didn't treat them all in this way—half of them are nothing but noisy students—I should never see the end of my work."

There was peace again for half an hour. Then the floodgates were opened and the tide flowed in. Alas, it was almost all that did flow in, very weak tea excepted. The dishes were nothing but grilled bones, and what there was the noisy students seized upon without ceremony. We made out as well as we could with dry bread, but



THE BUERBRAE GLACIER.

even of this there was a scarcity. It is no mere figure of speech to say that we both left the table more hungry than we had sat down.

About ten o'clock the landlord lighted a lantern and escorted the Frenchman to the "dependence." In the largeness of our hearts and the happiness of our deliverance, we accompanied him. For once he was rather silent. He felt that he had been circumvented.

Behold us a procession of four, Diogenes leading with his lantern, which cast the faintest glimmer in all the surrounding darkness. That darkness was almost appalling. Hills were about us on all sides, great black masses, cold and ponderous. The waters of the lake on our left were equally dark, silent and mysterious: equally cold. Our little night walk filled us with a weird and creepy sensation. We felt very far out of the world; we were so to all intents and purposes; visions of a comfortable inn in Christiania and a well-spread table haunted us. But at last we got rid of our Familiar.

The "dependence" swallowed him up, and we saw him no more that night. But we heard him. There was the glimmer of a candle in his room; he threw wide the window and the light behind him cast a great elongated Mephistophelian shadow upon the hill side. And he screamed out with demoniacal shout:

"Malbrouke s'en va-t-en guerre!"

To which he put an impromptu refrain which sounded like "Vogue la Galère!" And he beat a frenzied dance upon the boards: a perfect sailors' hornpipe or devils' tattoo. It might have been delirium produced by weak tea upon nerves insufficiently nourished, but we put it down to rage.

The next morning rose bright and glorious. Clouds, mists, and cold winds had all departed. We were in the midst of summer and paradise. Not exactly a Garden of Eden, full of flowering shrubs and rich luxuriance, but everything that was grand and wild and sublime. It is difficult not to multiply adjectives when speaking of these charmed spots of earth.

We were on the borders of the lake. Mountains towered on all sides, rising precipitously out of the water. Many of them were clothed with dark pine forests up to their very summits. Here and there portions were cleared and cultivated, and small farms had established themselves. High up, one could see small cattle grazing, and still higher, probably, there were small mountain saeters. A boat moored on the borders of the lake was the only means of communication with the outer world. Haymakers on the slopes, three or four of them just in one spot, were raking and gathering. What an ideal existence, if existence it can be called. Who would not renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world for such Arcadian bowers, where the shadows cast by the sun alone mark the passing hours, and the seasons are known by their fruits?

The waters of the lake were calm and sparkling. The little steamer was at the landing-stage, preparing to depart. A repast was

going on in the inn, another Barmecide's feast. All yesterday's visitors to the Rjukenfos were going through the imaginary process of breaking their fast. The noisy element abounded, and was a reality. These were all returning into the world, as we should return to-morrow.

The space at the back of the inn was full of carrioles and stolkjaers, and small, country-made, clumsy barouches. Each had its driver, and there was a Babel and a cracking of whips, and a general scene of excitement and expectation, that was rather exhilarating than otherwise. We secured our particular fancy in the way of conveyance, and felt comfortable in our minds. We dwelt in a fools' paradise.

Going for a little walk down the lake side to digest our imaginary breakfast, when we returned most of the assemblage, visitors and vehicles, had started on their way. Ours was in readiness, and we sank below freezing point as we saw the irrepressible Frenchman seated on the box by the driver. We felt that we were in for it.

"There were hardly enough carriages for all," he shouted out, impishly. "I knew you would be too pleased to give me a seat."

What a glorious drive it was. Few drives equal it in all Norway. It would take between two and three hours to reach Brue, the ascent leading to the waterfall. The magnificent region of the Gausta-fjeld surrounded us, rising 6,000 feet. On our left was the river. Its torrent increased as the valley narrowed. Gradually ascending, we looked into far-off romantic depths, where rushed and roared the torrent.

In one part, where the valley was still wide, and the stream had lost its intensity, the water was spanned by a rustic bridge. A mill had established itself on a number of small islands round which the river swirled. Men were busily at work, loose timbers were thrown about. Mingling with the noise of the water, came the sound and laughter and song of the men at their labour. And they worked with a will. No idleness here, and no want and poverty, though possibly no wealth. It was their lot and their inheritance, in every sense of the word, to work until the evening, and to rest from their labours only when the strong hands were folded once for all.

Narrower grew the valley, more wild and rugged and beautiful; deeper the precipice, lower the river, more rushing the torrent. We crossed a small bridge and reached the end of our drive, not of our pilgrimage.

We now had to ascend a rugged mountain path for about half an hour, which twisted and twirled and wound about, under the hill shadows. It was a wonderfully romantic walk. At last, where the mountains almost embraced, we came to an inn. An inn far out of the world and far above it, yet containing every reasonable accommodation, even to a table d'hôte. This was a very commonplace announcement in the midst of such romantic scenery. It was exceedingly welcome, nevertheless, after our feasts of imagination at Strand.

Even here we could not see the waterfall, though it might be very distinctly heard. It was as a sound of many waters, of rushing mighty waters. A narrow pathway from the house, on the mountain side, a turn to the left, and suddenly the waterfall in all its grandeur and magnificence burst upon the sight. An immense circle of rock, a great amphitheatre of stone; its extent so vast that a bird flying across the space seemed lost for ever. A torrent of water, foaming, seething, falling with terrific impetuosity a distance of over eight hundred feet. Falling with such force that the spray ascended in clouds, and the end of the fall and the bottom of this great amphitheatre of stone were never visible.

The roar was deafening. The scene was stupendous in its majesty and grandeur. We were on a level with the top of the fall, and this was our only regret. To get to the bottom and gaze upwards was impossible. About half way down was the most we could accomplish. Great ledges of rock, like platforms, stood out at different points and distances, and on these we stood, thinking each view finer and more splendid than the last, gazing into unseen depths with a shudder. The very birds flying across the abyss gave one an inexplicable thrill. A horrible feeling of the necessity of attempting to do likewise took possession of us. To hear a word spoken without shouting into each other's ears was impossible.

A mighty mass of water ever falling, falling, falling, white and foaming. And ever ascending was the drifting spray, that spread and dispersed like a cloud in the air. The mountains almost closed in, like great perpendicular walls of rock. The only passage for the waters was a narrow gully, twisting about like a snake. The water rushed and dashed, boiling and frothing over stones and boulders in its headlong journey to the far-off lake. We had followed its course upwards this morning; traced it backwards as it were; from the calmness of age, where it fell into the Tinesjö above Strand, to its hurrying, impetuous, passionate youth in this mountain pass.

We seemed to be at the end of the world; and for most people there is no going beyond. The road leading into the ruder districts of Thelemarken is a small path or ledge at the side of this precipice of wall: a few inches of rock for the feet and an inch or so of rock for the hands to hold. This you have to scale for many yards, your body literally suspended over the yawning chasm. One false step, a failure of the nerves, a slip of the grasp, and all would be over.

We had come for the fall and spent all our spare time gazing upon the unrivalled picture. On the whole, we thought it the most remarkable of all the great falls. The body of water of the Vöringfos was greater, but this fall was more beautiful and majestic, its surroundings were more romantic, its effect was more thrilling. On the other hand, the Skjægedalsfos was more ethereal and graceful, but the body of water was smaller, the amphitheatre of rocks far less grand, the approach to it less imposing.

Here you came suddenly upon the full blaze and burst of the whole scene, from its most striking and startling standpoint. At the first gaze the mind, bewildered, refuses to take in such an overwhelming assemblage of rock and falling water, such an immense circular abyss; for this great chasm and yawning depth, into which the torrent for ever rushed and roared, was the most remarkable feature in a scene where every detail was on a grand and stupendous scale.

But we had to leave it presently for a prosier occupation. E., dreamy and romantic though he was, had no intention of missing the midday meal. We had scarcely broken our fast in the early morning; and if, as Mrs. Glass said to Jeanie Deans, "There is ill talking between a full body and a fasting," the evil is only increased where the fasting is on both sides.

So we departed, and found quite a sumptuous repast; far more than one could have expected in this remote mountain pass, 2,000 feet above the level of the sea. Strand was altogether eclipsed; we should have said redeemed, but there remained still an evening and a morning meal to make out in the little inn overshadowing the lake.

And presently the time came to return. We went down the path winding amidst the mountains. Far below yawned the bed of the pass, through which the water rushed and raved. At the appointed place we found our conveyance in waiting, and the various drivers in a state of excitement. Whilst we were revelling above in the wonders of Nature, a small tragedy had been going on down here. One of the little horses had been suddenly seized with a mysterious illness, and died. There was mourning and lamenting amidst the drivers, who are fond of their little animals. Another had been found to take its place. These gaps are quickly filled up, not only in the world of quadrupeds. "One morn I missed him at the accustomed hill." It is a short record, and the world rolls on as before.

We returned through all the splendid valley, only the lovelier for being better known. Back between these magnificent mountain ranges; beside waters that gradually grew broader and calmer as the valley expanded.

So it came to pass that we once more found ourselves safe and sound at Strand. The obliging hostess was our friend as ever; in some mysterious way we had won her heart and good will, and her "good man" was quite as ready to be civil. It is true they could not make bricks without straw; and it's ill going to a scanty larder to feed a multitude; but we made a merit of necessity and took the will for the deed. We can all be very virtuous when there is no alternative before us. As an old friend is wont to say when finishing a sumptuous repast with a bit of dry bread: "My wants are few and they are easily satisfied." There is a Pecksniffian ring about the voice, but the twinkle in the eye contradicts the hypocrisy of the sentiment. Mr. Pecksniff's eyes never twinkled.

The next morning we left Strand with a heavy heart. Far rather

On the Naerofjord.

would we have gone back again up that matchless valley to the Rjukenfos. One day devoted to these glories was as nothing: unsatisfactory as the glimpse of Paradise must have been to the Peri without its gates.

Not that Strand was all Paradise. The Barmecide feasts were trying; the noise and the scramble we did our best to keep out of affected one's serenity. On these occasions the ordinary rules of politeness are too often ignored; it is everyone for himself; sauve-qui-peut. Those who have scruples and cannot so easily adopt the rule, come off far down in the race. Unless, like ourselves in this instance, they fall in with a discriminating hostess who takes them under her ample wing.

The weather had changed again, the skies wept for our departure. But it was morning instead of night, and more tolerable. Nevertheless, we looked forward with a certain amount of misgiving to the ordeal before us, if the rain continued. That ten hours' drive from Tinoset to Kongsberg was no light undertaking. And by way of Hitterdal—the Frenchman's proposed route—it would be twelve or thirteen hours.

The small steamer started with her freight of passengers. We all knew each other by this time, at any rate by sight. There was a more kindly spirit abroad. They realized that though "the Englishmen" had been admitted to the sanctum of the dining-room, all had shared alike in the feast of dishes. In fact, the Englishmen had come off decidedly second best.

A great many of them were country schoolmasters and mistresses; a small excursion from different parts of Norway. There was just the difference amongst them that nature delights in, who never makes her sons and daughters after one pattern.

They were all homely, some were rough, educated, but not polished; no doubt most were kindly at heart; and a few in themselves were very nice. One face haunts me still above all others. A tall, well-made man of about twenty-five, with dreamy, melancholy eyes and an expression which seemed to say that the race for life was a little too much for him. He was one of the exceptions who spoke softly and moved quietly and never put himself forward. He knew a good deal of English and French, and conversed well in both.

The lake was gloomy, but the passage down was interesting. It did not always rain, and we were tolerably sheltered. The lake is about thirty miles long, and not more than three miles broad at its widest. The mountains were desolate, but there is a grandeur in all mountains. Here and there the slopes had been cultivated into small farms, but they were few and far between. Our little boat ruffled the smooth surface of the lake and left a long wave behind her.

Tinoset at last, and the crowded station: more crowded and scrambling than any station we ever entered in Norway. It was badly situated, too; smothered by the hill side, and, in such weather,

damp and dark and gloomy. There was no order in the place. The women folk rushed about distracted, each head and pair of hands having enough work for a dozen. Everyone got somebody else's order, but as nine out of ten asked for coffee, it did not much matter.

Soon after we departed. Somehow or other we had missed the Frenchman. In spite of the weather he kept to his Hitterdal programme. We had never intended to take it, but returned as we had come, by way of Bolkesjö. Nothing could be finer than its scenery, and we were well acquainted with Hitterdal.

But the finest scenery would be lost upon one to-day. Clouds gathered, rain came down with a vengeance, roads were sloughs of despond. We went on and on, up and down steep hills, falling into ruts and falling out of them; passing through forests, under trees that wept. We almost wept ourselves. Under sunshine and blue skies this drive would have yielded nothing but delight.

At Bolkesjö we found another small crowd, where we had expected solitude. We were just in time for dinner, and sat down at least twenty to table. It was humble fare, but sufficient. All the splendid view was veiled, the mountains were lost in cloud.

We stayed about an hour and a-half, and then pushed on. The weather grew worse, but we entered Kongsberg in comparative calm.

We had been comfortably settled, had dined, were feeling at peace with all the world, had been sheltered at the hotel for considerably over two hours: when our irrepressible Frenchman drove into the yard. His astonishment at seeing us was worth witnessing.

"I thought you were behind me," he cried, when speech came to him. "I could not make it out, and believed something had happened to you on the road."

"And you never turned back to see?"

"Ah!" with a shrug of the shoulders. "Par un temps pareil, que voulez vous?" But he was of those who would not have turned back in the sunniest weather.

He certainly looked an object of misery. The vulgar simile of a drowned rat exactly expressed his condition. Two hours ago, probably ours had not been much better, but that was all in the past. But he was very much put out at our having stolen a march upon him, and did not easily forgive us. This affected neither our happiness nor our repose.

If anything, indeed, haunted those slumbers, it was the roar of mighty cataracts, the vision of a grand waterfall, of yawning chasms, amphitheatres of rock no hand of man could have raised; of rushing torrents, and rapid rivers; the sound of many waters, never silent in this land of the North.

And when we left Kongsberg next morning, the sound yet rang in our ears, and the influence followed us. And it follows us still, though not many days later we had passed away from the sunny atmosphere and all the unfading charm of these Northern Skies.

MRS. FITZGERALD'S NIECE.

By Jeanie Gwynne Bettany.

I.

"DO put your sewing down, Essie, and give poor Horatio a stool. Think how hard he has worked all day."

The young gentleman alluded to was one of those attractive specimens of humanity in whom fine limbs and fine figures are combined with an equal faculty for absorbing attention. He looked up indolently as his sister, not without a touch of pique, pushed a footstool under his highly-polished boots.

"And now you're comfortable, Horatio," said the first speaker, who was his mother, "I wish you would try and listen a little. I was telling you about Alice. I became convinced that she was secretly meeting a gentleman in her walks; and so this morning I quite made up my mind to have it out with her. I reminded her that she owed something to me for having brought her up, and defied her to deny that the person she had chosen was thoroughly unsuitable—which you know must be so, Horatio; or else why this secrecy?"

"And what did she say?" asked Horatio, indolently.

"I am grieved to say she behaved very ill, and refused both to disclose who the young man was or to give him up."

"And what did you do?" said Horatio, languidly.

"I requested her to leave my house at once," replied his mother.

"The deuce you did!" said Horatio, rising abruptly, to the imminent danger of a Maltese kitten seated near his footstool.

"Of course," said the lady with dignity. "And, Horatio, I wish you wouldn't use such expressions."

The handsome young fellow who had risen quitted the room without apology, and his mother and sister looked at the door some minutes after it had shut behind him. Then the lady turned her eyes upon her daughter and observed:

"That poor boy is so dreadfully tired. He works too hard, I am sure. You see, he couldn't even listen to a little family gossip. Poor fellow! I shall dismiss the cook if he has to wait for his dinner any more. He wants it badly enough, when he has been working so hard all day, and has had that nasty smell of turpentine about him, too. Horatio detests turpentine."

The young girl addressed looked a little irritated, and went on with her sewing with a slightly contemptuous curl of her upper lip that was not lost upon her mother.

"I hope this will be a lesson to you, Essie, for no daughter of mine

shall disgrace me. You've been always so absurdly fond of Alice, I am not quite easy about you. If you had only Horatio's strength of character!"

"I am tired of hearing about Horatio," said the girl, a little impatiently; "and of his dislike of turpentine and such things. He chose to be an artist; and if he had gone to sea, as he once said he would, he would have had a smell of tar instead. Besides which, there's always Rimmel."

"Ah, that reminds me," said the mother. "I must see to his scent-flasks. He has scarcely any White Rose left."

"I don't think Horatio liked Alice's going," resumed Essie.

"No; he's very tender-hearted," said his mother.

The girl smiled: and later in the evening, when her brother had come in, brought up the subject of Alice with a wee bit of malice on her much-enduring little countenance.

"I wonder where Alice will sleep to-night?" she observed.

"Oh, of course she can always go to her Aunt Martha's. But she has gone to *his* relations, no doubt," said the mother. "And pretty relations I expect they are," she added, with asperity: "for she frankly owned to me that he was idle, and had no position, nor immediate prospect of anything."

"Oh, she did," said Horatio.

"And I dare say he drinks, and all that sort of thing," went on Mrs. Fitzgerald, who had a tendency to "pile it up," as Horatio had termed it, whichever side of a question she took. "When I asked her why she did not give him up if he were all she said, she replied 'because she loved him.'"

"She said that, did she?" said Horatio. "She must be a foolish girl."

"I don't think I ever saw anyone so ungrateful."

"Nor I," said Horatio.

"Now don't make game," said Mrs. Fitzgerald; "there's no joke in it."

"Certainly not," said Horatio, calmly.

"You're sorry she's gone, aren't you?" said Essie, glancing mischievously his way.

"Yes," said her brother. "I wanted to paint her for my Academy picture."

"If that's all, dear Horatio, don't trouble, for there are plenty of models to be had quite as pretty as Alice."

"Not with her brown eyes."

"The vicar's daughter has lovely brown eyes," said the mother.

"Not with Alice's silky hair," went on the artist.

"Well, now, Essie's hair is good enough for anything," said Mrs. Fitzgerald; "and artists don't take everything from one model. But if you are so bent on having her, I dare say you could get her to sit to you. You could pay her, and she has so little money of her own

she might be glad. She certainly could not afford to throw up her home as she did."

"I thought you turned her out," said Horatio.

"No, she turned herself out by not conforming to my will."

"I hope Horatio's Academy picture won't wait till he can get Alice on such terms," said Essie.

"My dear Essie," returned her mother, with disapproval, "whatever Horatio wants he will probably get; and, when he chooses to exhibit, he'll probably exhibit. Moreover, as all your Aunt Caroline's money is to come to him, it's quite unnecessary for him to destroy his health in competing with those who have to earn their bread."

"I mean to learn to earn *my* living," said Essie, a little defiantly. But then she had the advantage of being the unfavoured child of the family.

To Mrs. Fitzgerald's astonishment, Horatio took a little special notice of his sister on this evening; stroked her head instead of the Maltese kitten, and played with a curl of her hair instead of his own moustache. This proved too much for the mother, who grudged the smallest attention her idol bestowed upon other than herself, and Essie was speedily reminded of the lateness of the hour, and was dismissed to bed.

"She's a great trial," said her mother, addressing her firstborn.

"She's a little brick," observed Horatio, in an undertone, that caught only his sister's ear as she left the room.

II.

"It will be such a pleasant surprise to Horatio, won't it, Essie?" said Mrs. Fitzgerald, as she shivered on a staircase-landing in spite of her sealskin wraps.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Essie. "And what a long time he is opening the door."

"That's just one of your answers, Essie," responded her mother, disapprovingly; "attributing to your brother want of proper sentiments. I dare say he is painting in a bit of grand inspiration and can't leave it for a moment. And, I assure you—though you are jealous of him and won't allow him any merits: when he was born with genius and you with commonplace faculties, which was not your fault, and therefore nothing for you to be angry about—that Leighton will be nowhere when Horatio does come out."

"I wish he would come out; I'm tired of waiting here," said Essie, and she gave a few sharp raps on the door.

"How thoughtless of you, Essie," said her mother, "to startle him in that way. He'll have to paint out something through that, I know."

"It wouldn't be any harm if he painted out the whole picture," retorted Essie, who was getting a little cross. "I don't think he paints at all well; so now it's out."

"You are too young to have opinions," said her mother, severely.

"I don't know how you can make such a remark after the splendid portrait Horatio made of your Aunt Caroline."

"The nose was too long," said Essie, her eyes bright with mischief; "the hair was the wrong colour, and Aunt Caroline didn't like it."

"Was that Horatio's fault?" asked the mother, sharply. "You know very well how he told us that the first day she sat to him her hair was black, and he painted it in black; at the next sitting it was brown, and he thought he had made a mistake and corrected it; but at a third sitting she had altogether forgotten to dye her hair, and there it was, grey enough. So Horatio painted it in grey and left it, which served her right. If she had been my sister she should never have used hair-dyes, and so I often told your poor papa when he was alive. And as to the nose being long, that is true to life, and what more do you want?"

"I think I will run down stairs and ask if Horatio is here," said Essie, whose enthusiasm for genius didn't go quite the length of waiting on a draughty landing till inspiration should be over and the genius condescend to open the door.

She soon tripped up the stairs and told her mother, with an amused countenance, that Horatio hadn't been near the studio for three weeks.

"Then he is engaged in some other artist's studio," said Mrs. Fitzgerald, complacently, "and is going to astonish us all. Oh, that his poor papa had lived to see it!" And she went home in a happier frame of mind than ever about that boy of hers.

III.

NEARLY a year had passed, and Mrs. Fitzgerald had two open letters before her on the table. Her face was quite white with vexation, and Essie's flushed with suppressed laughter.

"I never met with such insolence," the elder lady exclaimed, pointing to one of the letters. "To marry at once in direct opposition to my wishes was bad enough; but to call her child after my boy, and ask me to be godmother to it, is really too audacious. Probably the child is to have its father's name as well as my boy's, and that is sure to be Joseph or something quite as commonplace.—Horatio Joseph! it's quite too absurd! And perhaps Alice thinks I shall give the child something handsome, for her lazy husband is sure to have a cramped income. But Alice makes a mistake; I can forgive, but I cannot forget. However," she went on, taking up the other letter, "your Aunt Caroline is dead, so Horatio comes into the property. We will all go abroad, away from Horatio Joseph and all of them."

"But his name may not be Joseph at all," said Essie, showing a row of little white teeth between her rosy lips.

"Perhaps you know all about it, Essie," replied her mother, with a look of keen penetration. "You have never given a proper confidence to your mother; and if you've been keeping up a secret communication

with Alice, which I more than suspect, I do hope you have not disgraced yourself so far as to speak to her husband."

"There could be no disgrace in my speaking to her or her husband," said Essie, boldly. "Alice was the best and kindest friend I ever had."

"Then you *have* been to see her; I read it in your face; and I know where Alice lives."

"At Aunt Martha's or at his relations?" inquired Essie.

"She lives at Ward's Cottage; the housemaid told me so, and I silenced her at once. I have allowed no one to speak to me of Alice after the way she left me. I shall go to Ward's Cottage and tell her what I think of her letter, and I shall find out if you have been there. Horatio would never befriend one who had insulted his mother. I wish his sister were like him. And, Essie, you ought to be ashamed to be laughing like that, and your aunt lying dead!"

Mrs. Fitzgerald, having quickly habited herself, made her way towards the cottage referred to, and, having knocked at the door, was confronted by an old woman in a frilled cap, in whom she recognised an occupant of a free seat in the parish church for a number of years.

"Will you tell my niece I am here," said Mrs. Fitzgerald, icily.

"Yes, my lady," said the old woman, who so addressed all the distinguished feminines of the congregation.

As Mrs. Fitzgerald waited a moment in the little passage, she thought she heard a masculine voice within the little sitting-room, and mentally resolved to ignore this unknown husband. However, when a moment later she was introduced into the pretty room, with its soft white curtains and tasteful arrangements, where her niece sat in a pink gown with a glad look in her eyes, she was literally speechless at seeing no other than her own Horatio holding the baby. The old woman gave her a chair only just in time; she collapsed into it rather than sat down, and looked in a dazed way at her idol.

"You see, mother," began the idol, "I was the one Alice was engaged to, and we kept it secret for good reasons of our own; but when you turned her out of doors, why, of course, I married her. What else could I do?"

Mrs. Fitzgerald nearly choked at the words. Then she had actually thrown the girl into his arms; and he, with his genius, might have married at least a peer's daughter, which would have compensated her for her own obscure origin, which was always a galling fact in her consciousness. Her cross was greater than she could bear. But she had yet to learn the full measure of her misfortunes.

Essie had entered unperceived and was kissing the baby in her brother's arms with more energy than that delicate morsel of humanity cared about. She had been unable to forego the gratification of seeing this avalanche fall upon her mother. Mrs. Fitzgerald was too much shocked by this unexpected revelation to notice Essie in any way.

"And so the money has gone out of the family," she observed, dolefully; for it was clear her boy was gone from her.

"It would have done, but for my marriage," said Horatio; "for Aunt Caroline, so a letter informs us, has left everything to Alice, having never forgiven me for painting her hair grey in the portrait. And she was right about the painting being badly done—Alice has brought me to my senses. I can't paint at all; and lately I have been doing some work for Sir William Holland, and am to become his private secretary. And a good thing too, for he won't let me be idle;" and, as he finished this little speech, he glanced admiringly at his pretty wife.

"Good-bye, Horatio," said Mrs. Fitzgerald, tragically, rising and extending her hand.

"Don't go like that, mother," said her son, as kindly as he could. "Come and make friends with Alice, and let us be right all round. I am sure she was a good girl to you while she lived with us."

"Yes, she was always a good girl," admitted Mrs. Fitzgerald, unconsciously influenced by Aunt Caroline's will. "Let bygones be bygones, Alice, if you like," she added, going up and kissing her niece: to the great delight of Essie, who had to exercise violent self-control to avoid laughing outright at the turn things were taking.

"We have all lived happily together once, Alice," went on her Aunt, "and why shouldn't we again?"

"Why, indeed?" answered Alice, who was too happy herself to wish to be hard on anyone.

And certainly Mrs. Fitzgerald was wise in her generation, for she had dipped dangerously deep into the fortune her husband had left her to gratify the extravagant tastes of her boy—looking forward, as she had done, with certainty to his coming into Aunt Caroline's money.

WEATHERBOUND;

OR, WHAT I HEARD AT THE BEAR.

WE were seated before the fire in the comfortable parlour of The Black Bear in K——, a small town on the Welsh Borders, where I was staying a few days on legal business. By "we," I mean myself and another gentleman who had come in during the morning, and who was to me till that time a stranger.

He had come with the intention of proceeding further, but the weather had suddenly become stormy and compelled him to stay the night. Early in the morning snow had begun to fall; and by the afternoon the streets were covered to the depth of some five inches where there were no drifts, and, in places exposed to the wind, to almost as many feet. The approaches to The Black Bear, in spite of the strenuous exertions of the ostler and stable helps, incited thereto by bribes of hot ale, could with difficulty be kept passable; and The Black Bear himself, on his pedestal above the porch, sadly belied his title, and looked a very good representation of his congener of the Arctic regions.

My chance companion was an elderly gentleman of some sixty years of age, pleasant and intelligent in appearance, with an old-fashioned dignity and courtesy of manner which at once commanded respect. As during my stay at The Bear I had seen no one to speak to but the landlord and attendants, I welcomed the coming of this guest as a godsend. When dinner-time drew near, we agreed to take that meal together, and, by the time it was over, a stranger, hearing us talk, might have supposed we were old acquaintances.

I found that his name was Jervis, of the firm, as he told me, of Urlin Brothers and Jervis, of Crutched Friars, Wine Merchants, and that he was down here on business connected with the house. He was affable and courteous to a degree, but subject, I observed, to occasional fits of abstraction, from which, when addressed, he would rise as it were with a start; and occasionally his eyes would wander and fix themselves upon objects of such common interest that you could not help wondering what he saw in them deserving of such

minute and apparently rapt attention. I am persuaded now that he never on such occasions saw them.

Of course our conversation turned chiefly on subjects of general interest, and, as might be expected, occasionally upon the weather.

I noticed, however, that this topic he, as far as possible, avoided; and when, after dinner, going to the window and for a moment drawing back the curtain, I remarked that I thought I had never seen so heavy a snow, at least in the time, my friend (for so I may now call him) received the remark with a kind of shudder, and said, as it were, deprecatingly:

"True, I dare say, sir; but it is not a pleasant subject to talk about—to me, at least." He finished with a repetition of the shudder I had observed, and drew his chair towards the fire.

Thinking that he had in his mind the physical discomforts and inconveniences attendant on a snow-storm, I was proceeding to say that these were certainly detestable, when he checked me with:

"Ah, sir, it was not that I was thinking about, though they are bad enough; but to me it is the associations, sir, the associations they bring with them."

For a moment I was silent. I could not guess what he meant. The "associations" of a snow-storm, apart from the drawbacks in question, were to me pleasant enough; they brought to mind visions of snow-balling, cosy Christmas gatherings in country places, stories of Alpine adventure, and such like, which invested them with something of poetry and romance. I therefore hazarded the safe remark that nearly all our pleasure, or the contrary, in any object depended upon this same association, and I presumed that snow-storms in his mind were connected with events the recollections of which were not agreeable.

"That is too true, sir," he replied; "and, therefore, with your permission, we will change the subject."

We did so; but, to my surprise, a short time afterwards, he returned to it of his own accord, saying:

"It is a singular thing that I should find myself here again under such circumstances. The last time I visited this country was in a storm like this, and before that it was in just such a storm ——"

Here he stopped, and went off into one of the reveries I have spoken of; adding, as if speaking to himself: "There must be some fatality about it."

He remained in this reverie for the space of several minutes, with the tips of his fingers placed together, and his eyes gazing intently into the fire. Suddenly rousing himself, as it were with a new resolution, he said:

"Sir, would you like to hear my story? Perhaps, after all, it would do me good to tell it. Sometimes it does, when I can find a listener who will receive it—I will not say with belief, for that is hardly to be expected, the circumstances are so extraordinary—but with some attention and sympathy."

I hastened to assure him that he could not do me a greater favour than by relating the circumstances which seemed to have left so lasting an impression on him.

Mr. Jervis, after another long gaze into the fire, and without moving from his position, then proceeded to relate the story, of which the following is the sum and substance.

It is now some thirty years ago that the event occurred which this day's storm has brought specially to my remembrance. I say specially, because the recollection of it is never altogether absent. It visits me both in my waking and sleeping dreams; at all times, indeed, when the mind is not wholly absorbed in important matters of business.

I was then a traveller in the firm in which I am now a partner. My beat, as we called it, lay principally in the Southern and Eastern counties, but I had a brother-traveller named Marlow—Charles Marlow—to whom was assigned the Midlands, whence he made occasional journeys into Wales and the Welsh borders.

Marlow was my particular friend. Whenever we were off duty and could meet in London, we saw as much of each other as possible, and we hardly ever failed to arrange our rounds so as to be at home at Christmas and eat our dinner on that day together. A kinder, heartier, nobler fellow than Marlow never lived. He was liked by all, and respected by the firm, who would have trusted him with their last farthing.

It was his duty, as mine, to make several journeys a year, taking fresh orders, chiefly from private customers and the best class of innkeepers, and receiving payments for accounts due. Cheques were not so common in those days as now, and we were usually paid in cash or notes, which we transmitted through certain banks, or brought with us and accounted for on our return to headquarters. In this way, we were often the bearers of large sums.

It was in 1838 that I parted with Marlow, as he started on his last journey for the year. He was in good health and spirits, and expressed his intention of being back with me, as usual, at Christmas. In fact, the last words he spoke, as he mounted the coach before the "Bull and Mouth" in St. Martin's-le-Grand, at parting were: "Good-bye, old friend, keep a place for me on Christmas-day." I replied that he need not say that, pressed his hand, and watched the coach out of sight.

Shortly afterwards I went upon my own round, from which I returned, as usual, a few days before Christmas. At the office I had intelligence of Marlow. He had been heard from in Wales, and was expected back every day. I also found a letter from him at my house, the burden of which was a repetition of his parting words: "Look out for me at Christmas."

We did "look out."

Every day I expected to see his cheery face and hear his hearty

voice at the office. But day after day passed, and the Eve of Christmas arrived, and there was no sign of his coming. The partners thought he had been detained by the weather, which had suddenly become stormy, and gave little thought to the matter. He would turn up, no doubt, they said, in time to settle his accounts before the end of the year, and that was enough for them.

For me, however, it was not enough, and I still kept anxiously on the watch for his appearance. I felt sure that nothing but some dire misfortune, or the most absolute necessity, would prevent his arriving sooner or later.

Down to the last moment we did not give him up, and when dinner-time came on Christmas-day, we postponed the meal as long as possible, on the chance even then of his appearance; and when we sat down to table, a chair was placed for him and his place was left vacant.

I was living at Clapham then, with my mother and sister, whose eyes, I think, though she said nothing, wandered as often as any other's to the vacant chair. Our party was a small one, consisting, besides ourselves, of my brother-in-law, John Fenton, and his wife, my elder sister.

I remember, even at this distance of time, how we lingered over our meal, protracting it as long as possible in the hope, to which we still clung, that our friend would yet come in before the end of it. From the windows of our small dining-room we commanded a view over the common, and, as long as it was light, our eyes would glance that way in the faint expectation of seeing his figure in the distance.

At length, the evening closed in and the ladies retired to the drawing-room to have a chat by themselves, leaving Fenton and me to finish our wine in the firelight.

There is no hour of the twenty-four, in my opinion, so impressive as that which forms, as it were, the border line between day and night, partaking of the glory of the one and the softness of the other. It is solemn and impressive at all times, but especially and peculiarly so, I have always thought, on the great Social Festival, when so many memories revive, and when our thoughts are naturally divided between the past and the future. It is an hour which I never like to shut out or shorten by a single moment at any time, but least of all on that day which, proverbially coming but once a year, we would fain keep with us as long as possible.

So Fenton and I sat in the gloaming, drinking our wine—a bottle of 1820, a present from the "firm"—and as a poet, not then heard of, has since written, "revolving many memories." Sometimes we talked, but more often we sat in silence, thinking, I am very sure, of the same things.

And now I come to an incident in my story which I do not ask you to believe; which you are at liberty, like others, to attribute to

hallucination, to optical delusion, to excited imagination, or any other cause you please. I can only relate what I saw and what took place, and point to after events to say how far any one or all of the above suggestions afford any satisfactory explanation of the mystery.

It was our custom—a custom common then, and not, I believe, uncommon now—on that day to recall with each glass of wine the name of some absent friend; and Fenton and I had duly toasted that evening all we could remember, when we thought of joining the ladies' party. But there remained just a glass each in the decanter. Pouring out these, I said :

"Fenton, we must find one more toast, and—what do you say? —since we can think of no one else, here's good old Marlow again. How I do wish he was here."

I raised the glass to my mouth, and, in so doing, mechanically or instinctively, glanced towards the chair which had been left vacant for him. At the same moment an exclamation, partly of delight, partly of surprise, escaped my lips. What did I see? The chair was no longer vacant. There, as plainly as I now see you, sat Charles Marlow, his hand on the glass, returning my pledge. I rose and shouted :

"Why, Marlow! How in the world did you manage to come in like this, without notice?"

I may remark that the idea flashed through my mind that he had stolen in unseen in the darkness, with the knowledge and connivance of the ladies in the other room. Under this impression and with the above exclamation on my lips, I rushed forward to seize him by the hand.

"Marlow, my boy ——!" But the words died away on my lips. There was no Marlow there. The chair was vacant.

I rubbed my eyes and appealed to Fenton.

"Fenton," I said, "did you not see him? Charley, I mean."

"No," replied he, "I did not see him; but if you did, he must have slipped out. Let us see if he is with the ladies."

The ladies had neither seen nor heard him. We searched the rooms; we went to the door and looked out over the common; no Marlow was discovered, then or later.

Christmas passed, and weeks went on and no news came of Marlow.

At last the firm began to be alarmed. Something must have happened to him. Letters were despatched to correspondents in the place where he was last heard of. From replies to these and other sources, it was ascertained that on the afternoon of the 21st December he had left the town of R—— with the intention of reaching this place, where we now are, whence in those days a coach ran to join the London coaches at W——.

For this purpose he had hired a conveyance. During the day the

weather had been cold and lowering. At the moment of his starting snow began to fall, soon to come down in such abundance that some miles along the road the post-boy, who gave this information, found it almost impossible to proceed. He contrived, however, to reach an inn some ten miles from the place of starting, beyond which, in spite of every inducement that could be held out to him, he resolutely refused to go. It was, he said, an absolute impossibility—no carriage could make its way through such snow, especially over the mountain road it would, in this case, have to traverse.

"Under these circumstances," said the post-boy, "Mr. Marlow declared he would walk. He *must* reach K—— that night, in order to catch the coach in the morning. He would leave his heavy things behind him and take only a small hand-bag containing some absolute necessaries."

The post-boy had endeavoured to dissuade him from the attempt, and the landlord of the inn had added his remonstrances, but all to no purpose. He knew the way, he said, and could get over the worst of the road—meaning the mountain pass—before night-fall. "So saying," said the post-boy, "he left us, and we watched him along the road, stepping out bravely, in spite of the snow, in which he sank to his ancles."

This was the last seen or heard, in the flesh at least, of Marlow.

Of course we made every inquiry. Rewards were offered, the country searched, no trouble or expense spared to solve the mystery of his disappearance. From the moment spoken of by the post-boy all traces of him vanished as completely as if he had been swallowed up in the earth, or translated to the skies.

Of course, there was no lack of speculation as to what had become of him; and many ingenious surmises found utterance, not one of which, however, was based on the slightest foundation of fact, or threw the least real light on the matter. He had lost his way: he had been buried in the snow: he had fallen over a precipice—but in these cases, why was the body not forthcoming?

There were indeed two other hypotheses to which this was no answer, but which seemed almost equally improbable. He might have met with foul play, or he might have—absconded.

As regards the first of these, it was urged, who on such a night would be likely to be about capable of committing such a crime as the supposition implied? Besides, whom had he offended? or what enemy had he in that neighbourhood, or, indeed, anywhere? As regards the second, though *I* knew it to be the most impossible of all, there was more to be said.

Marlow, at the time of his disappearance, had, it was known from the accounts of our customers, a considerable sum about him. He was not a rich man. He was not necessarily expected to account for the money till the end of the year. Might he not have taken

advantage of the opportunity of making off—of finding his way, not to London, but, say, to Liverpool or Bristol, and thence across the seas, where in those favourable days for emigrants, the sum at his disposal would soon have developed to a fortune?

The supposition was, I say, to me the most impossible of all, and beyond description abhorrent; but I could not help feeling that to others it might not seem so, and this made the situation to me intensely painful.

Years went on, and at length I became a partner in the firm for which I travelled.

I still, however, occasionally "took a round," now in one district, now another, as inclination led me. And so it happened that one year—no matter which: it was some time in the "Forties"—I took a fancy to go over the ground once taken by Marlow, and to accept at the same time an invitation from a friend, an old customer of the firm, to stay with him by the way.

Accordingly, late in the year I started. And, whether by chance or by an intention concealed even from myself, I will not say, I found myself, on the very day of the year on which my unfortunate friend had left it, in the very same place in which we had last heard of him.

By a still more singular coincidence, if we may call it so, the weather threatened to be a repetition of that experienced in his case, and, in point of fact, proved so. Nevertheless, I determined, like him, on pursuing my way, and by the same route.

Hiring a strong horse and gig and an experienced driver, I set out in the afternoon; and, more fortunate than my predecessor, managed to get farther on the road before driving became difficult.

After passing the inn, however, where my friend was last seen, the storm rapidly increased in fury. The wind rose and the road became encumbered with drifts which greatly impeded our progress. Still, urged by me, the driver persisted; until, coming to a point in the road where it crossed a bridge thrown over the head of a deep gorge or dingle, we found it impassable. The winds here collecting, as in a funnel, had piled up the flakes into such masses as to almost obscure the roadway, and we were brought, just as darkness was setting in, to a complete standstill.

What was to be done? It was as difficult to retreat as to go on. We determined, therefore, to leave the carriage where it was, and to push on on foot, if possible, leading the horse.

By great exertions we at last forced our way through the drift and, by carefully picking our steps, managed to make some progress. Still the attaining of our destination (the house of my friend with whom I was to stay) that night was, we saw, out of the question. All we could hope to do was to push on till we came to some house or shelter for the night. My guide assured me there was such a place at the head of the pass, if we could only reach it—a small road-side inn, used, he said, chiefly by drovers and foot travellers.

not by such as I, but where on a night like this I might not object to put up.

At that moment I felt as though the rudest backwoodman's log-hut, or the wildest mud-cabin in Connemara would be welcome, if it only afforded fire and shelter; and the very thought of finding these at The Crow's Nest, as my guide called it, lent me fresh vigour to push forward.

At length, rounding a sudden turn in the road, to our intense joy we caught a glimpse of a light just before us. We were soon in front of the window whence it issued, and, demanding admittance at the door, we found ourselves, as my guide had said, in a very rough habitation, but which seemed to me a palace.

We inquired if we could have lodging for the night and were answered at once in the affirmative. "There was a bedroom for me, and my man could have a shakedown somewhere, they dared say."

The innkeeper and his wife seemed decent people, though rough. They stirred the turf fire, and got us the best supper they could, which we washed down with welcome draughts of warm ale, and when my bed was ready I retired to rest.

The guide had evidently underrated the comforts of the lodging. My bedroom was a chamber almost on the ground, approached by a passage from the kitchen, and raised two steps only. It seemed a recent addition to the house. There was a rude French window at the end opposite the bed, opening, as I could just see through the darkness, in an enclosure from the hill-side. The window, I noticed, had neither blind nor curtain; but without stopping to make further observations, I as soon as possible got into bed. In less than ten minutes I was sound asleep.

And now I come to the second of those incidents in my story, for which, like the first, I will not attempt to account, but leave those to explain as they may who bring everything to the test of their own experience, or think they have mastered all the mysteries of the universe when they have read the last handbook on Natural Philosophy. I merely state what I saw and what happened before my eyes on this occasion.

I had—sometime, I think, after midnight—got through my first sleep, and was turning over in that state of semi-consciousness which intervenes between it and renewed slumber, when, chancing to open my eyes, I perceived that the room was no longer in darkness. The moon had risen, and its light, reflected from the snow, cast a fitful gleam into the chamber, sufficient to show the shape of the objects.

The perception of these brought me to a recollection of where I was and completely aroused me. From the immediate objects my eyes wandered through the window to the ground outside. It seemed an enclosure from the hill and was banked by a grove of trees, planted, no doubt, for the sake of shelter. The snow, otherwise bright in the moonlight, was flecked here and there with shadows.

I lay long contemplating this scene and meditating on the strange accident that had brought me to so wild a lodging.

Suddenly the shadow as of a cloud seemed to flit across the panes, and I became conscious of a chillness in the chamber as if a sash had opened. Then I became aware of the presence of *something;* something unsubstantial, indeed, for it presented no obstruction to the eye, yet had the power of motion, for it advanced from the window into the middle of the room.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, but yet definitely and clearly, it condensed, as it were, and took shape. Yes; there in the dim moonlight, a few feet from the foot of my bed, stood the figure of a man, outlined clearly in the framework of the window.

As yet, however, I could discern no features—only a distinct, though shadowy form. Gradually the lineaments of the face began to develop themselves under a strange light that seemed to grow out of them, and was not the light of the moon, but electric or phosphorescent. With eye fascinated, I watched; and there at length, clear and distinct, without any possibility of doubt, I recognised both the face and figure of Charles Marlow, in the garb which he wore in life.

I tried to speak, but breath failed me; and so I sat upright in amazement. Then he, beckoning me with one hand to follow, began to move towards the window. I rose—I could not have refused, even if I had desired to do so: which, however, I did not—and obeyed the motion.

Down the room, through the window, out into the moonlight, some dozen paces, he passed, I following.

Suddenly, under the shadow of one of the pines I have spoken of, he stopped. Then facing me, and pointing with one of his hands to the ground, I saw his figure sink slowly and solemnly into the earth and disappear.

I stood as it were petrified; for I knew then, by a kind of instinct, what the vision meant, and that I had received a revelation from the dead. Gradually a feeling of blended pity and anger overcame that of fear, and marking carefully the spot, I retreated to my chamber and to my bed, where, in spite of all I had seen, I fell again into a troubled sleep which lasted till morning.

I then arose, and without mentioning anything of the events of the night to any one at the inn; and leaving my guide to get back with the horse and carriage as well as he could; I made my way on foot to my destination, which I found was not far off.

My host received me with all the more welcome from my somewhat unexpected appearance. To him, as to an old friend, as well as a man of position and authority in the neighbourhood, I lost no time in confiding the secret of which I had become possessed in so extraordinary a manner, in the assurance that I should receive counsel and advice and, if need be, assistance.

He listened with attention, though it was impossible to tell from

his manner how much credence he attached to it. When I had finished, he merely inquired what conclusion I drew from the facts related, supposing them to be facts.

I replied that the conclusion I drew—a conclusion which, in my mind, amounted to an absolute certainty—was that my friend had in some way come to harm at The Crow's Nest, and that if search were made, proof of it would be found under the shadow of the pine where I had seen him disappear.

"If you believe that," replied my host, "the search will present not much difficulty. The place, as it happens, belongs to me, and I have no doubt I can arrange to have it thoroughly explored for your satisfaction."

It is needless, and it would be painful to enter into the details of the arrangements that were decided upon to test the truth of my belief. I will only say that they were carried out in such a manner as to arouse no suspicion in the minds of any one employed in the business as to their real intention.

The result of them was, it will be sufficient to add, to confirm my worst suspicions. There, in the exact spot I had indicated, about three feet below ground, lay the body, or what remained of it, of my poor friend. I will not stop to describe the horror of the discovery, but hurry on to state that, satisfactory proofs of identification existing, the remains were, after the necessary legal and other formalities, deposited in sacred ground, where they now rest.

There could be no doubt that my friend had been the victim of a foul murder. But how was it done and who were the perpetrators? So far as public knowledge goes, these points remain to this day mysteries. The following facts, however, suggest an explanation, which to my mind leaves little to be supplied.

I learned from my host that at the time of my friend's disappearance, The Crow's Nest was in the occupation of one Owen Owens (better known as "Owen o' The Crow"), who lived there with his wife and his son David. Both the place and its occupants were of evil repute. The former was the resort and the latter were the confidants in a measure of poachers, sheep-stealers; in short of all the idle and dissolute of the district. Owens was generally behind with his rent and other payments, and some six months after the time I spoke of, in order, as was supposed, to escape these debts, he suddenly, together with his wife and son, disappeared, and was never again heard of.

It was by these people, I felt and feel convinced, that my friend was made away. On the night of his disappearance he had sought shelter at the house, as I had done under similar circumstances; and, for the sake, no doubt, of the contents of that bag he carried with him, had been killed, and his body deposited where it was—I will say so providentially—found.

Of this, I repeat, I have no manner of doubt. In fact I am no less convinced of it than I am of the certainty that wherever the murderers may have fled and wherever they may be, the justice of Him who alone saw the deed will follow, even if it has not already overtaken them.

With these solemn words Mr. Jervis finished, and we sat for some time in silence. I then turned the conversation to some other topic, and shortly afterwards we both retired for the night. In the morning, the weather having improved, or rather the roads being made more passable, my fellow guest departed and I saw him no more.

A short time ago, however, I was reminded of him in a remarkable manner, and to the occurrence of this incident is due the attempt which I have made to record Mr. Jervis's story in writing.

I have a friend resident in America who sends me from time to time copies of American newspapers. In one of these I came upon a paragraph of which the following is the substance:

"*The Smithville Murder.*—On Friday last, the extreme sentence of the law was carried into execution on Richard Jackson, storekeeper, for the robbery and murder of Ambrose Carter, a travelling jeweller, staying in his house, full particulars of which have already appeared in these columns.

"The prisoner before his death made a full confession, when some remarkable facts were brought to light. His right name, it appears, is not Jackson, but David Owens, and he was a native of Wales, where, in conjunction with his father, now deceased, he perpetrated some forty years ago a similar crime, on account of which and with the money thus acquired he fled the country. The world is thus, by the execution of Friday last, rid of a wretch whose hands were 'steeped in crime.'"

I confess that on hearing Mr. Jervis's story I was sufficiently puzzled what to make of it; although I had come at last to regard what may be called the supernatural parts of it as the creation of an oversensitive imagination acting upon a very nervous temperament. The reading of this paragraph, however, gave a rude shock to this conclusion; and I am now more than ever at a loss to account satisfactorily for "What I Heard at The Bear."

"What of the ships that have sailed away?
What of the watchers on pier and quay?"

LOVE'S VENTURES.

WHAT of the ships that have sailed away?
What of the watchers on pier and quay?
What of the prayers that the women pray,
Straining their gaze o'er the misty sea?
With a throb of hope and an ache of fear,
And a smile far sadder than any tear!

Some of the ships have come safely home
(And faces are bright this Christmas-tide!).
But some still toss on the green-gray foam,
(And loving hearts go unsatisfied!).
And some, we know, will return no more,
Having cast anchor where storms are o'er.

What of the hopes that for ever grow?
The snowy hope of the blushing maid?
The young man's hopes that so richly glow?
The old man's hope that will scarcely fade?
Those strange, sweet hopes that still spring again
From hearts down-trodden by woe or pain?

Ah, many a hope has taken root,
And many a hope has burst to flower;
But some, we find, have a bitter fruit,
And some are fallen in breeze and shower.
Only hopes folded in God's good will,
No wind can buffet, no frost can kill.

Some homes are lonely this Christmas-tide,
Some hearts are sad with a secret loss;
But God's hand is wider than seas are wide,
And Heaven is founded upon a Cross!
After life's gloaming, and Death's dark night,
Love's missing ventures shall come to light!

ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO.

THREE ROSES.

By Joyce Darrell.

I.

FORTY-FIVE years ago a young man and a girl stood in a garden beneath the shadow of a blossoming lime, and the young man had just gathered a rose. He stood awkwardly twirling it in his fingers, and longing to ask the girl to keep it until he returned from India to claim her as his bride. She pretended not to divine his intentions, not being, indeed, quite sure whether she wished him to declare them.

Forty-five years ago in England young ladies wore sandalled shoes, white stockings and skimpy skirts; and they piled their hair on the top of their heads and braided it smoothly over their ears.

Forty-five years ago young men wore long coats, rather tight in the waist, and swathed their necks in thick black satin stocks. They did not yet wear moustaches and they did not smoke.

People had not yet quite recovered from their first surprise at the rapidity of railways, and were still agitated at the sight of a telegram. They regarded sunflowers as an ordinary sort of weed, and, except from their grandmothers, perhaps, had never heard much of blue china. But in their uncultured and prosaic world flowers bloomed as brightly, birds sang as sweetly, bees were as murmurous in the lime-blossoms as now. And love told the same unchanging tale, so hollow in old ears, so musical in young, while lovers were as reckless of their happiness and as prone to misconceptions in those days as now.

"Isn't it a nice afternoon?" said Miss Carrie Bulstrode, just to break the oppressive silence, and she glanced up at the cloudless sky.

"Very nice," murmured Hugh Dormer, while thinking that her eyes were as blue as the heavens, and as fair.

"So you are really going this evening?" resumed the young lady, with a brief sidelong glance at the rose. Did she wish him to give it to her? Did she not?

"Yes. We are under orders for foreign service. I—I can't delay," he stammered, chilled a little by her tone, which he thought had sounded indifferent; yet feeling that not to speak now would entail on him the blackness of despair.

"Well, I hope you will soon come back," said Carrie placidly. She was sorry that he was going, yet not quite sure that it was not as well. It was nice to be made love to on dreamy summer evenings, but not quite so nice to be asked to part with your liberty all at once. He had drawn a little nearer to her, and his eyes were fixed on the pretty down-bent head of his love.

"Not so soon," he said. "That is not possible. But if you—if I—when I am away, I mean ——"

He stopped desperately. Carrie, a little frightened, glanced up at him shyly and doubtfully. Fatal glance! He had hardly caught it before it was gone—transferred once more to the daisied sward—but it completed his discomfiture.

And, unfortunately, just at this moment there came a burst of laughter, a clamour of young voices, a rush of feet—and all Carrie's young brothers and sisters—a goodly tribe—raced up the path from the river-side, and burst like so many Red Indians on the lawn.

Hugh threw away the rose, nervously mindful of a dreadful day when he had been "chaffed" unmercifully for bringing one to Carrie. Alas! Bobby Bulstrode picked the blossom up, and with fiendish glee began derisively waving it about.

"Poor Carrie! Would she like to have it—would she?" cried Bobbie, and he twirled it half-an-inch from his sister's exasperated face.

"I don't know why you say 'Poor Carrie!'" remarked the young lady, majestically. "The rose is not mine, and I should not wish to have it, for it is no beauty." And thereupon she walked away with her head in the air, feeling very indignant with Hugh for making her, as she conceived, ridiculous.

As for him, for five minutes he thought he had received his death blow. For he was only twenty-two, poor boy! and very ingenuous and ardent!

The next moment, however, the recollection of his regiment and of those longed-for marching orders came to his aid. He cheered up a little, although still quite convinced that happiness and himself had bid one another an eternal farewell.

Night brought counsel and courage. The next day he strode again across the fields from his own home to Carrie's, determined to put his fate to the touch: for was not that evening to see him on his journey?

But the words that he had been rehearsing were never spoken; for on entering Mrs. Bulstrode's drawing-room he found it tenanted not only by Carrie, but also by young Mr. Conway, the son of the Squire, and Hugh's most dreaded rival.

Mr. Conway, a brilliant, handsome fellow, and the most eligible young man of the neighbourhood, had for some time past been paying court to Carrie in a tantalizing, on-and-off fashion, and on this particular morning he looked more in earnest than usual. Carrie's pretty cheeks were flushed and her eyes bright with gratified vanity. Perhaps, too, with the dawn of a worthier feeling.

The sight was anguish to Hugh. He stayed a few wretched minutes, that felt like hours; then realizing that Mr. Conway had every intention of outstaying him, he said "Good-bye" to the girl of his heart for ever.

II.

About a year later a morning dawned that was Carrie's wedding-day.

She was to be married to Mr. Conway at last, after much opposition from his family, and trouble of all sorts, which only made him seem better worth the winning.

This hour of her joy was contemporaneous with much dread and danger in that great world where men both do and suffer. Terrible news had lately reached England from the East—news of cruel massacres, of blackest treachery, and, alas! of some dishonour to the British flag at Cabul.

But gallant men had fought their way to the rescue, and the nation drew a little comfort from knowing that some, at least, of the victims of Afghan treachery had escaped.

Among the officers of the relieving force was Hugh Dormer : and he had been wounded almost to death.

With these tidings came others to the effect that he had borne himself nobly, and if he survived had nothing to look forward to but glory and reward. "If he survived," said the letter that brought the news. Tragic contingency! which wrung every heart that loved him, and chilled even Carrie in the midst of all her joy.

Poor Hugh! She remembered him very tenderly in these days, and felt glad, yet sorry, to think that so noble a heart had loved her. He was not charming, of course, like Philip Conway; not so handsome, not so clever, nor yet braver : for where was the virtue, Carrie thought, of which Phil, the gallant and gay, had not more than his full share? Oh! she would be happy! Her life now would be one long dream of bliss. With no troubles of her own to think of, she would be able to do so much more for other people. She would sympathize with everybody in sorrow—help everybody who had need of it—these deeds should be the flower and the fruit of her deeply-rooted content.

The wedding went off brilliantly. Congratulations, smiles and prayers for her future were showered on the pretty bride. What wonder if in that hour of pure and perfect, yet bewildering happiness, she forgot poor Hugh, lying wounded in hospital under a burning Indian sky? Yet just as she was preparing to start on her wedding-journey, a letter was put into her hand. It was written by one of Hugh's comrades, and at his dictation, at an hour when he thought, and everyone thought, that his young life was ebbing away. And it contained a message such as any woman might be proud to receive—a declaration of love as manly as it was fervent—and a prayer for her happiness whatever might be her lot. Tears gushed from Carrie's eyes as she read the touching words. It almost broke her heart to think that her reply, word it as she might, could only bring him pain.

"You must answer it," she said, turning to her chief bridesmaid, a most intimate friend. "I cannot, for what could I find to say? Tell him—yes, tell him that I prize his love above everyone's but Phil's—that I shall think of him always, always as my truest, kindest, warmest friend—that every night of my life I shall pray for him that his future may be glorious and glad. And Louie, listen: send him this rose with my love; the love of a sister; and tell him I am sorry I hurt his feelings the last day but one that he was here. Say that there is no woman whose heart is free but would be proud to own his love. He must remember that and forget *me*."

Louie performed the commission faithfully and as tenderly as a kind-hearted woman could. Hugh kissed the faded rose when it reached him: then hid it away carefully, and manfully tried to bury his sorrow also, and even to lay the ghost of it.

III.

One evening, in the early part of last year, 1885, an elderly lady—one of the prettiest old ladies imaginable—was seated at a dance in a country house. Her expression was a little anxious, as she watched her favourite granddaughter, the beauty of the evening, being led out for the third time by the same young man.

"A most decided flirtation," said another old lady, very comfortable and kind-looking, who had crossed the room at the same moment, and now sat down next to Mrs. Conway. "A most decided flirtation! Don't you think, Carrie, that you ought to interfere with it in the interests of your protégé, young Wodeleigh?"

"My dear Louie, has any good ever come of active interference in such matters yet? I can but watch and be wary and carry the child off before any great harm is done. Who *is* the young man, by the way?"

"Is it possible you do not know? He is that young Dormer who distinguished himself the other day in Egypt, and is the grandson of your old adorer."

Mrs. Conway made a gesture of surprise.

"Sir Hugh himself is to be here to-night, I was told," continued Mrs. Bulstrode—for the intimate friendship between the "Louie" and "Carrie" of bygone days had ended in their becoming sisters-in-law. "Have you ever seen him, by-the-bye, since that time—what ages off it seems—when you nearly broke his heart?"

"Never," said Mrs. Conway, carelessly and briefly.

She was an admirable woman, universally respected and looked up to, but she had done with sentiment long ago. Some people were daring enough to call her a little worldly. Perhaps the reproach was not altogether undeserved. At any rate, her life was too busy and too full to allow her leisure for tender reminiscences. Love, romance—the irridescent dreams of youth—seemed to her very un-

important things now compared with social ease and good position and honourable influence. She was a Lady Bountiful in her parish, and busied herself with useful schemes of many sorts. Her life was upright and blameless. She had known some heavy sorrow: had awakened from some illusions: had parted half unconsciously with many hopes. But most of these things had gone from her so gradually that she had not missed them, perhaps, as much as they deserved.

Her mind was so vigorous that, unlike many elderly people, she lived far more in the present than in the past. Indeed, she rather despised regrets as a mere waste of time, and had never been conscious of rueing one single thing which she had done.

Grace, her youngest, her fairest, her only unmarried granddaughter, was now the chief object of her affection and care. She earnestly desired a marriage between her pet and Arthur Wodeleigh, who was the best parti of the neighbourhood. Grace unfortunately had not hitherto seemed to fancy him much, for, although negatively good enough, he had nothing special to recommend him beyond his enormous wealth. But she was a gentle, loving young girl, devotedly fond of her grandmother, and Mrs. Conway trusted to her own influence to make all right in the end.

Arthur Wodeleigh had proposed: had been rejected by Grace, but encouraged by Mrs. Conway, and had gone back to college for his final term, determined to try his fortune again when next at home.

It really would be provoking if Grace—hitherto entirely heart free—were to fall in love in the meanwhile: and she had looked dangerously happy this evening whenever she had found herself in handsome Frank Dormer's company. She had met him at a country house where she had been staying lately, and whither a slight attack of illness had prevented Mrs. Conway from accompanying her. They had only been together three days; could that have been enough to work irremediable mischief?

Mrs. Conway's musings were anxious—the more so that she could not deny the young man's attractions. He was dangerously good-looking and had charming manners, not to speak of his reputation as a hero. It was all very annoying, for Mrs. Conway had been too long accustomed to settle things for everyone to be able to feel perfect equanimity on seeing one of her favourite plans threatened with extinction.

The dance was an unceremonious affair, and somebody suggested an impromptu cotillon. The idea was seized with avidity, and an agreeable "society man" was constituted leader, and proceeded to distinguish himself by improvising figures. As no toys had been provided, he was able to display some ingenuity; and presently ordered that one of the figures should consist in each lady proving her preference for one of two partners by presenting the favoured dancer with some flower that she was wearing.

At this very moment the proceedings were temporarily interrupted, and some excitement created, by the entrance of two gentlemen. One was a tall, soldierly-looking, handsome old man, whom Mrs. Bulstrode instantly discovered to be Sir Hugh Dormer. The other was Arthur Wodeleigh, who arriving home unexpectedly and hearing of the dance had profited by his intimacy with the lady of the house to present himself uninvited. He was received with open arms, and several young ladies brightened visibly on seeing him. But among this number was not Grace; and Arthur, on his side, did not look best pleased on perceiving the devotion towards her of Captain Dormer.

Mrs. Bulstrode whispered laughingly: "There will be complications!" and Mrs. Conway seemed divided between anxiety and pleasure.

The cotillon was resumed, and the leader perceiving that Arthur lingered near Grace, and not being in the secret of the little drama, selected him and Captain Dormer to be her rival partners. She was placed on a chair in the middle of the room—the two young men were brought up to her and she was instructed to present one of them with the rose in her waistband. There was a little pause. A smile ran round the room.

Grace blushed and hesitated, while both men turned pale. Arthur, indeed, was extremely anxious. He had come back for the final answer to his proposal and instinctively he felt that Grace's decision at this moment would decide his fate.

Grace, looking very sweet and winning in her shy doubtfulness, had half turned towards Captain Dormer, when she accidentally caught her grandmother's glance and again drew back. Mrs. Conway had looked at her almost supplicatingly, and the young girl, tender-hearted always, shrank from inflicting on her so public a blow.

On the other hand, it pained her not to give Frank Dormer the proof of her regard. Her eyes fell on Frank's father, who was standing close by Mrs. Conway, and watching Grace with a strange, puzzled expression. Quick as thought the girl took her resolution.

"Nay!" she exclaimed, with her fresh, sweet laugh, "I shall give it to neither of you," and gliding across the room, she paused in front of Sir Hugh. "Will you have it?" she said, brightly.

He looked at her with an air which she did not understand—an air at once tender, regretful and bewildered.

"And your name, my dear," he said, gravely—"is it Carrie?"

"No," Grace answered; "but they often call me Carrie Junior, for they say I am so like Granny."

"Ah," said Sir Hugh; and bending, with old-fashioned courtesy, over the little hand which held the rose, he kissed it seriously and kindly. Then he drew it inside his arm and walked away with his "partner," while the figure of the cotillon proceeded to its end.

"Oh, Carrie! A dangerous move that of Grace's," exclaimed Mrs.

Bulstrode. "He adores his son, and will tell her of all the young man's heroic deeds. You know, he married quite late; out of mere pity, it was said, for the forlorn young widow of a brother officer, left without a creature in the world to take care of her. If it had not been for that, he would probably never have married, for he is not one of those who lightly forget. What a noble-looking man he is, Carrie!"

But Mrs. Conway did not answer. She had heard every syllable of the brief conversation between Grace and Sir Hugh—had heard him ask the girl her name, had seen him kiss her hand, and herself, as was natural, had sat by unrecognised.

Something long repressed, long foregone, had risen up in that moment and confronted her with familiar, regretful eyes. It was the ghost of her youth; the memory of a vanished springtime; of hopes, of ideals and illusions gone like the song of the birds, like the fragrance of old days.

With a pang, the more painful that it was new, Mrs. Conway recognised the fact that her rich, her prosperous, her envied life had been a disappointment. The highest faith and love of her heart had died long ago, and with it lay buried (she knew it now) all that was noblest in herself. And what had survived? Things that, dearly as she had prized them, seemed to her infinitely paltry now in comparison with all that she had lost. Bitterly she felt that she had thrown away gold for dross, and that the idols of her worship had possessed feet of clay.

The dance went on, and Grace, flushed to new loveliness, her eyes starry with delight, waltzed again with Frank Dormer, while Sir Hugh made his bow in front of Mrs. Conway and talked affectionately, half-pleadingly, as it seemed to her, of "his boy."

Grace was struck with a new expression in her grandmother's eyes, when she joined her at the end of the ball: a wistful, softened look that she had never seen there before.

It gave her courage to creep an hour later to Mrs. Conway's bedroom, and kneel down beside her in front of the fire by which she was brooding, and to press her fresh young cheek caressingly against the pretty wrinkled one.

"Granny," she said, softly, "I cannot marry Arthur Wodeleigh. Indeed, I cannot."

Mrs. Conway laid her hand softly on the rippling gold tresses that everybody said were so like what her own had once been.

"Do as you like, my child," she said, gently. "You are wiser than I."

LADY VALERIA.

By A. MOBERLY.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"IF ONE WHISK OF FATE'S BROOM SWEEP OUR COBWEB IN SUNDER."

MR. PARAMOUNT was waiting excitedly at the head of the staircase, when ten minutes later the Vicar came striding up.

"It's all right!" he said, in a loud, eager whisper. "She's in there. No. 47. I saw her again when she stopped to speak to the chambermaid. There's no mistake."

"Did she see you?"

"Me? No. And she wouldn't have believed it if she had seen me here, would she? Or anyone else."

The champagne was pink in the cheeks of the little old gentleman, his eyes were shining. The world had been turning upside down with him in the last few hours. He had been cheering Sampson from a lamp-post, lunching with a lord and a lady, and now he was joining in a conspiracy with the Vicar! *Vogue la galère.*

"We had better go and confront her at once, without waiting for Meynell. She might come out, and we couldn't exactly make a scene in the corridor," Mr. Stannard decided after a moment's reflection. "Come on. You are quite certain of the woman? Very well. Please address her directly as Mrs. Beltran." He beckoned a passing chambermaid, and after a brief conversation they proceeded down the corridor to No. 47. The girl opened it with her pass-key, knocking as she did so.

"Two gentlemen to see Mrs. Beltran," she announced, and the Vicar and Mr. Paramount entered as she spoke.

It was one of the handsomest rooms in the hotel; gay with gilding and polished wood, and satin and lace draperies. A bright little fire crackled on the tiled hearth; the air was a trifle over-perfumed by scents from the gilt and silver-mounted bottles that sparkled on the toilet-table, the scented linings of costly raiment and the quaint odours of Eastern stuffs. Tall mirrors reflected a chaotic assemblage of rich and delicate woman's gear—furs, velvet, fine linen and laces, trinkets, millinery, gloves, fans, slippers, ivory brushes, bangles, covering the bed, the floor and the tables; while to receive it two large Saratoga trunks yawned open at one side of the room.

In the centre stood Euphrosyne, upright, with head thrown back,

meeting the intruders with a gaze of haughty displeasure in her steady black eyes. She was a striking figure. She had taken off her dress for convenience of working, and was clothed in an under-garment of yellowish silk, trimmed heavily with lace, that left her round dusky neck and long lithe arms bare. In her black satin corset and heavy swinging skirts, striped with satin bars of yellow and crimson, she looked like a "play-actress," Mr. Paramount thought, and would have retreated in modest confusion had he been able. As it was, impelled by the Vicar, he blundered forward a step or two, faltering :

"Mrs. Beltran ! I hope I see you well," in a manner wildly unlike his usual acrid precision.

Mrs. Beltran neither stirred nor spoke, nor withdrew her steady, disconcerting gaze from her two visitors till the maid retired and the door closed. Then she bestowed a slight, contemptuous smile on them, and demanded :

"What has brought you here, gentlemen ? I am not prepared to receive visitors—as you see," with an expressive gesture of her dusky, unclothed arms that made Mr. Paramount blush again to his ear-tips and vainly strive to back out through the shut door. "Your errand must be very urgent."

"It is. Very urgent," spoke the Vicar, stiffly, his calm eyes resting on the picturesque figure before him as indifferently as if she had been a district-visitor in a mackintosh. "So urgent that I was obliged to insist on seeing you, though I was assured downstairs that there was no such person here. As Mr. Paramount is an old acquaintance of yours, I brought him with me. I am Mr. Stannard of St. Fridolin's."

She had been studying him through her dropped lashes as he spoke, and gave him another cool bow when he stopped, but never stirred from her position in the middle of the room, erect, her head thrown well back, her long arms with their broad bangles of dull gold dropped in front of her, the finger-tips lightly linked.

"I have had the honour to be one of your parishioners. In what can I serve you ?"

"By remaining here till my friend Mr. Meynell shall arrive. I have reason to believe that you can give him some information on family matters, and have telegraphed to him to come at once. We need not detain you long," he answered, polite but uncompromising.

"You are quite sure that I possess it ?" raising her eyebrows slightly.

"As sure as I am that your name is Madame Euphrosyne Girard, and that it was you who overheard my conversation with Lady Valeria Meynell one evening last year, and traded on the knowledge you then acquired."

"Profited by it," she amended, unmoved. Then with a half-smile : "Perhaps, if I am to receive any more guests, it might be better to make some slight toilette. You will excuse me ?" and turning to an

array of silks and satins on the bed, she picked up a soft, plush tea-gown, deep orange colour, fur-edged, and heavy with glittering embroidery. She got herself into it in an instant, and stood before the long glass fastening the gold clasps, and studying the effect of the long trailing folds with complete indifference to the presence of spectators.

"Why do you stand? Please sit down," she threw to them carelessly over her shoulder as she gave a readjusting touch to the great solid twist of black hair piled up on her small narrow head, and fastened there with a great gold pin.

Mr. Paramount willingly dropped into a chair. Eustace remained standing. For all Euphrosyne's ostentatious sang-froid, he felt that she was on the alert to take him at a disadvantage when she could. It was the sleepy stillness of a cat with every muscle contracted for the spring. She moved quickly and softly round the room, closing open drawers and wardrobe doors, clearing the table of its accumulation of chiffons, tossing them aside into the open trunks, and disinterring chairs from the piled-up treasures of millinery, till in a few moments the room assumed a perfectly orderly appearance. She looked round complacently.

"May I offer you some coffee? Chocolate? A brandy-and-soda?" she asked, with her hand on the bell. "Mr. Meynell is long in coming."

Her offers were hastily declined by the two, who felt as anxious for Mr. Meynell's appearance as she did. She picked up the poker and adjusted the fire; tried to lift the great brass coal-scuttle and failed, and turned appealingly to Mr. Stannard, but was anticipated by Mr. Paramount, who trotted forward and performed the office of stoker with neatness and dexterity.

"It smokes, I am afraid. It is the fog, I think." She lifted the window slightly as she spoke, and closed it again with apparently no result; none, at least, visible to the occupants of the room, neither of whom could see that in that brief moment a white silk scarf had been hastily flung out and secured by the shutting down of the sash: an unostentatious but distinct signal to anyone who knew where to look for it. Almost in the same moment a footstep halted outside, and a knock at the door announced Mr. Meynell's arrival.

The banker entered; his pale cheeks a trifle flushed, his sharp grey eyes alert.

"The fog has delayed me," he began directly, addressing Eustace. "What have you to tell me?"

He had taken in Euphrosyne in one direct, inquisitorial glance as he spoke. She met it smiling graciously, and seemed to await an introduction, standing, a gorgeous, red-gold figure, between the dying day and the flickering firelight.

"Mr. Meynell—Madame Euphrosyne, a lady well known to your mother. Her surname in those days was Girard, also—as this gen-

tleman can tell us—on occasion Beltran, by which name her husband is also known."

Euphrosyne bowed, her eyelids drooping with superb indifference, but her ears losing no word or tone of the conversation. Mr. Meynell's lips twitched eagerly. He checked the words on them, however, and turned on Mr. Paramount.

"Who is this?" he demanded, with scant courtesy. "Is it necessary to bring in outsiders?"

"Mr. Paramount, my friend and churchwarden, has done us the great service of identifying this lady, and I believe can assist us further. We may rely implicitly on his discretion, even in such a delicate investigation as this."

Mr. Paramount bowed, all aglow at his ancient enemy's just appreciation of him, and the honour of a personal interview with the great banker.

"We need not refer particularly to the painful story your mother confided to me on our first interview. Madame Euphrosyne admits that she was a concealed listener to the conversation, and has presumably profited by it. I have no doubt she made the knowledge pay well in ministering to your mother's hallucinations during her lifetime, and since her death has been concerned in the production of the claimant, who professes to be your elder brother."

Mr. Meynell's eyes snapped angrily. He winced at the allusion to his mother's hallucinations and frowned at the mention of his "elder brother," but spoke no word for a moment.

"You can prove this—or we shall eventually—no doubt?" he asked, willing to leave the initiative in the Vicar's hands.

"I think I can——" he was beginning.

"Pardon!" interrupted Euphrosyne, with a graceful gesture bespeaking attention. "I regret the trouble you give yourself. I am quite willing to admit all you require. What you have said is the truth—the perfect truth. I have no wish to deny one word. I *did* overhear Lady Valeria's story, and I *did* see my way to take advantage of my knowledge. Not at the moment: for there were proofs to be brought together, and money was scarce and had to be earned before it could be spent. In the end I did succeed; and, before her death, I did bring to Lady Valeria and cause her to recognise her eldest lawful son, Stephen John, the adopted child of Stephen Magrath and Bridget his wife, your mother's foster-parents."

"Personated for the occasion by your husband, Morris Beltran," added the Vicar. "Our friend, Mr. Paramount, can help us to prove that."

"By my husband, Morris Beltran," she assented, calmly. "By whom else? How should I otherwise have known the story, if I had not married him under the name of Stephen John Magrath? We changed the latter, for reasons of our own, to Beltran. No harm in that."

There was dead silence. The banker's jaw fell, and he looked from Eustace to Mr. Paramount in turn, as if for support under this fresh shock. Eustace was gazing at her with utterly contemptuous unbelief, mixed with some secret dismay, and some admiration at her light-hearted audacity. If the lie were improvised for the occasion it was a perfect stroke of genius; if it had been prepared beforehand there was more trouble in store for them. In either case they had come to a dead-lock, having only made the discovery that the foe they had to fight was double-headed.

There was nothing left for it but to withdraw now. They had no shadow of pretext for detaining her. Listening at a keyhole is not felonious, and Meynell was already beginning to look agitatedly at her, in dread of what more she might know and, perhaps, be disposed to reveal.

Madame Euphrosyne appeared quite to understand and enjoy his perplexity. The fire on the tiled hearth was blazing high now, and she stood warming first one and then the other gold-embroidered toe, now and then contemplating her reflection in the mirror above the mantelpiece with lazy approbation, studying the effect of her bare round arm against the dark fur edge of her wide, open sleeve, adjusting her bangles, or darting a glance at the glimpse she could catch of the crestfallen three, her eyebrows arched with an expression of supreme indifference. Eustace watched her face in the glass likewise, and she saw he did, and made the smallest indication of an impertinent grimace. Then—like a flash of a lantern—a great look of white terror shot over her face; her hand involuntarily raised itself, and her head bent forward to listen. There were voices in conversation without. She turned round, speaking half aloud. "One, Two, *Three*," she said in a husky, awe-stricken tone. "Two, and all well. Three, and all lost. Who is it that comes?"

A heavy knock on the door. Meynell, who was nearest, opened it, and a tall figure in full uniform entered, followed by a policeman. He stopped in front of Euphrosyne, and looked at her full in the face. "Madame Girard, as I supposed. Then, policeman, I give this woman in custody."

The policeman made one step forward. "Very good, sir. What's the charge?"

Euphrosyne, her lips parted, her eyes dilated, stepped softly backwards a pace or two, and dropped as if crushed into a large armchair, seeming to shrivel and draw together into a small crouching heap, from the middle of which her black eyes glittered, terrifiedly watching.

"Who are you? How did you come here?" she panted.

"You know who I am, well enough, and what I want you for," was the uncompromising reply. "I don't imagine you *did* expect to see me again so soon. I saw you never recognised me when I passed you this morning. *I* did *you*, however, and I vowed I would not lose the chance, if luck sent me in your way again."

At Edric Poynter's entrance he had passed the Vicar with a hasty nod of recognition, intent on his errand. Now as Eustace looked at him, there flashed across his mind a sudden glimmer of the truth, a vague guess, not yet capable of being put into words, of where the clue to this strange entanglement might lie. He pressed forward eagerly.

"Captain Poynter, we are all equally concerned in this. Here is Mr. Meynell," who advanced hesitatingly.

"At last!" Edric exclaimed, holding out his hand. "I have tried again and again to see you. I ought to have written, but Lady Valeria insisted so strongly on my *seeing* you, that I felt bound to try and do so, though I was not able to deliver what she entrusted to me. A letter and ring, which were stolen from me the very night I received them—stolen by this woman, as I did not discover till a few weeks ago. I put them away as securely as I could, one night; and she contrived to get into the room and open the drawer with the key from under my pillow. I don't know how she managed it, except that our doctor asked if I had been performing an operation, when he came in next morning; the whole place reeked of chloroform, he said. One of my young men, who knew her well—young Paramount, you know ——"

"What, my son Sampson?" asked the interested father.

"Yes, that's the man," replied Edric, breaking off to recognise and shake hands with him. "He knew her well enough, and wondered to see her prowling about that night. Later on, he watched her leave my hut long after my return, but thought it was no affair of his, and made no inquiries. Pretty conclusive, is it not? I think a magistrate would say so, at least. She has started me off on a voyage half across the globe since, for some reason connected with it. That I can't bring home to her yet; the theft I can. So, policeman, do your duty."

The light of conviction flamed higher and higher in Eustace's mind as he listened. He looked to Meynell for some sign that he, too, shared the illumination, but he only frowned perplexedly and kept silence.

"Not for a few minutes," pleaded Eustace. "A few words more of explanation from you now may be everything to us. An hour later it may be valueless." He glanced again at Meynell as Big Ben slowly sounded three o'clock. "I hope—I cannot help feeling—that the right end of the tangle is in our hands at last!"

The policeman retreated to the corridor at a word from Edric; and Eustace, after a whispered question to the banker, produced and laid on the table the small black case containing the proofs of Magrath's identity.

"Will you tell me exactly what was stolen from you?"

"A letter in a long blue envelope, sealed with a coat-of-arms. In one corner of the envelope, very faintly marked, my initials, and the date, '30th June, 1882.'"

"What else?"

"A rather large red leather case with a broken fastening. The ring inside was—I really don't know what stone—reddish brown, engraved. I only had a short glimpse, but I could swear to the setting."

Meynell's attention was at last awakened. He came eagerly forward.

"We are justified in opening that case, Mr. Stannard, after hearing this?"

"I think so." And the Vicar slowly, and with some reluctance even, broke open the seals which Magrath had placed on the enclosure. He beckoned to Mr. Paramount to stand near and observe what followed; and then, his hands trembling with excitement, removed the paper.

"The case is gone, but here is the ring."

"The same; I'm positive."

"And, I hope and believe, the letter."

They all closed round him to look at the crumpled blue envelope, addressed to her son in Lady Valeria's unmistakable hand, in one corner of which, as Edric had said, were pencilled faintly, but still distinct, his initials and the date of that memorable night.

Eustace's eyes flashed triumph at Meynell, who still pondered frowningly, as not yet clearly seeing the bearing of this discovery. Edric was simply dumbfoundered.

"Didn't she take them, after all? Young Paramount will swear to seeing her leave my hut that night. And how did you come by them?"

"Your case is only the stronger, Captain Poynter. They were brought to us by that woman's husband. Can't you see," turning impatiently on Meynell, "Mr. Poynter has been employed to personate the elder brother, by some device?"

"I can't understand," began Meynell, slowly. "Do you mind telling me the circumstances under which you received this?"

Edric looked embarrassed.

"I have been wishing to do so for some time, you know. They were strange enough. I had better wait till we are alone. I don't understand them myself. I think she mistook me for somebody else. She asked me to give up my profession and live with her as her son, and called me 'Jack' ——"

Meynell stopped him by putting the letter into his hands.

"You will understand it all when you read that," he sighed. "I can trust your honour and discretion, and will give you any further explanation you may need. You were got out of the way to prevent the fraud being discovered before those swindlers had escaped with the spoil." And he darted a glance of venomous wrath at Euphrosyne, as she sat crouched in her chair, apparently forgotten for the moment. She had drawn into herself, as it were. Her black

eyes had a dull, unseeing gaze; her lithe limbs drooped inert; she looked like the fabled snake, who, in the last extremity, had turned on itself its deadly fangs, and died rather than live in the hands of its pursuers. Or was it the snake feigning torpor or death, while gathering force for a more deadly spring?

"I don't wish to say anything more about that part of the business," Edric hastily interrupted, wishing devoutly that Mr. Paramount were out of hearing, instead of listening, wide-eyed. "I got safe to Gibraltar in time to overtake my regiment, and had kind friends who put the case before the authorities in the proper light, so I have actually suffered no loss in the long-run. But what am I to do with Madame Girard? Is she to get off? Look here," he said, turning to her, "Mr. Meynell is going to hear every word I can tell him of your dealings with his mother. You threatened me with all sorts of mischief, you know, if I didn't keep silence, but I only wish I had gone straight to him at once and let you do your worst."

"Tell it him all now!" She spoke in a low tone of menace. "He'll thank you. There is another pleasant surprise in store for you all." Her dull eyes began to glitter wickedly, and she pointed to the miniature-case. "Open that, and tell him whose the portrait is. Look again at the ring. Say that I stole it if you dare! If you do not know the coat-of-arms, there are initials inside. That ring belongs neither to you, nor me, nor him, but to the person who gave it to Lady Valeria de Cressy—to Sir John Archdale."

She sprang suddenly bolt upright, and discharged the name like a shell into their midst. Eustace felt a clutch at his arm, and Meynell, with a smothered groan, sank into a seat beside him. Mr. Paramount blinked and wondered, but Edric, after a moment's stare of mystification, recovered his wits.

"So much the better! We can settle it all at once, then. Why not? He was outside a minute ago; I asked him to wait. Sir John!" flinging open the door. "Sir John?"

"No!" faintly cried Oliver, and Eustace hurried to prevent him—too late. Sir John had actually been engaged in discourse with the policeman within a pace of the opened door, and, before it could be reclosed, had inserted his inquisitive old face, saying:

"I'm here. What does anybody want with me?"

CHAPTER XLV.

BARONET OR K.C.B.?

THERE was a dead silence in answer to the General's question. Mr. Meynell turned in his chair and hid his face away. Euphrosyne, for the first and last time in her life, stood blank and disconcerted. The Vicar held his breath, fearful—he knew not why. The name as pro-

nounced by Euphrosyne, in her tone of menace, and the look on the banker's face as it passed her lips, had been sufficient revelation of the nature of his unspoken dread, which yet, despite his own shadowy misgivings, seemed on the face of it too wildly incredible to entertain. Sir John, umbrella in hand, his shabby old brown overcoat surmounting his gold-striped legs in hideous incongruity, his jolly old face charged with amiable inquisitiveness—he to be Lady Valeria's gay young lover; he the hero of that tragedy of stormy passion? He could as soon suspect the policeman, whose heavy tread was heard pacing his beat solemnly and incuriously (except as to the extent of his possible reward) outside the closed door. Sir John? He looked no more capable of carrying a guilty secret concealed in his honest old heart than of wearing a hair shirt and knotted cord under the smart, padded breast of his tunic.

"I don't wish to intrude, but I felt sure I heard my name—somebody called me?" he asked, looking from one to the other of the blank faces.

"I did," spoke Edric, the only unconcerned one of the party. "We're all at cross purposes, somehow. I charge this woman with helping herself to something belonging to me. Never mind how *I* came by it. *She'd* no right to it, anyhow; and she seems to think it sufficient to say it belongs to *you*. I thought the best way was to have you in, and settle it forthwith."

Eustace's heart lifted itself in thankfulness as he watched Sir John's perplexed old face—perplexed only—crossed by no shadow of guilty misgiving. "Mine, is it? Let me see it;" and he took the ring from Edric's hand, hitched his glasses on his nose and turned it over curiously. "Yes. There's the crest right enough."

Eustace laid a reassuring hand on Oliver Meynell's shoulder. He looked up, and a flash of wild hopefulness quivered over his ghastly face as he rose, and, leaning on the Vicar's arm, listened with trembling eagerness for Sir John's next words. "Well, I dare say it *is* mine, if everyone had their own," he said, cheerfully. "Poor Jack's ring! Where did it turn up from? Do you see his initials inside? —J. le Q., that's for le Quesne, his mother's name. I don't know how you came by it," turning to Edric, "but if ever you care to dispose of it, I should like to have it."

"I hardly know whether it is mine to dispose of," Edric answered doubtfully. "It was given to me certainly, but under a misapprehension. Am I at liberty to tell any more?" looking for permission to Oliver.

"Tell everything," he replied in feverish haste. "We have no reason for concealment. Nothing of the truth can do half the deadly mischief of that woman's falsehoods. Let her—let all the world know what there is to tell!"

"Of course, of course!" cried Sir John. "What's the good of secrets? Not that I'm ever let to have any of my own; but I've

gone through enough with those of other people to get a sickening of them for life. Poor Jack's affair now ——"

"Lady Valeria Meynell gave it to me last summer at Folkestone. She had a fancy that I might prove to be some relation of hers."

"Lady Valeria, of course. I might have guessed it. Poor thing, poor thing!" and Sir John shook his old head sorrowfully. "I was at Seagrave Place that day, you know," in a half-aside to Eustace. "Curious, wasn't it? The first time I had gone near her since her wedding. Her *second* marriage with *his* father"—nodding towards Mr. Meynell—"you understand. A lovely creature she was—dear, dear!"

The air seemed full of a rising light of hope. Sir John's cheerful prosings were dissipating a whole thunder-cloud of black doubt and mystery. Euphrosyne sank into her chair, sullen and lowering; yet watchful of events, regarded stealthily, at intervals, by old Mr. Paramount, with a sort of fascinated glance of utter scandalization.

"What did you know of my mother's first marriage?" asked Meynell, with an effort that felt as the rolling away of a mountain's weight.

"Why, nothing, or it might never have happened. He was a wild one, was Jack! Nothing bad in him, though. I've got his letter—the last he wrote, the most beautiful thing you ever read, keeping up the story to the last of his death being an accident—written, in fact, just to clear that old scoundrel Kilmoyne."

"I thought he was shot in the Phœnix," cried Eustace, as excited as Meynell. "Do you mind telling us all you can about the business? By way of beginning, who was Jack? I'm afraid I don't understand very clearly yet."

"Jack was my cousin—Sir John Archdale—the head of the family. We were both in the service—he in the 8th Dragoons and I in the Royal Denbigh. We were both stationed in Dublin in the same time, and the first I knew of his marriage was some joke about *my* having left a wife behind me there, which brought old Sir John (he was alive then, and my guardian) down on me in a tearing rage to ask what I had been up to. You see," turning apologetically to Meynell, "we had never heard Lady Valeria de Cressy's name mentioned, and he had an uncommon talent for getting into scrapes, had Jack. I had just promised to go and make inquiries, when the letter came. He was lying mortally wounded, shot by that mad old Irishman in his blind rage, and his last thoughts were to screen him and provide for his poor little wife. He sent me his will, the certificate of his marriage, and a letter to my mother—the only lady friend he had in the family—begging her to take care of his dear little girl. You shall read it all for yourself."

"But why was the letter not acted on?"

"The news of his death came directly after, and it killed his old father. It was a month before I could get back to Dublin, and then I could find no trace of her. Lord Kilmoyne was abroad, no one

knew where, and Glenara shut up. I dare say I ought to have done more, if I had only known how; but I was a young fellow, my leave was running out, and the regiment going on foreign service, and I should have been rather puzzled what to do with the young lady if she didn't choose to accompany me home. I was only a distant sort of cousin. Jack was the last of the elder branch; the baronetcy became extinct in him. It never occurred to me, either, that there might be a possibility of his leaving an heir. So off I went to Corfu, and was forgetting all about it, when my mother wrote saying she had met the de Cressys somewhere, and they had a beautiful Irish niece with them. I knew she meant Lord Kilmoyne's younger brother and his wife (the Protestant branch of the family, not on speaking terms with the elder lot), and didn't think at once who the 'Lady Valeria' might be. Directly I realised it, off I started for England, and reached London just in time to hear of her approaching marriage with Meynell, the banker's son. I went to the de Cressys, of course. They knew all about it, and were as kind as they could be, but begged me to keep out of sight of their niece. The shock of Jack's death had unsettled her wits, and at the time of her baby's birth, and long after, she was quite out of her mind, and the restraint of the convent made her worse. She used to rave about her baby—wouldn't be persuaded that it was dead."

"And was it?" cried two of his listeners simultaneously.

"No mistake about it. The de Cressys had their wits about them enough to know that a baronetcy and property depended on the child, and got everything made safe before they exported the Magraths at their own expense. However, the grievous thing was that poor Lady Valeria, after her last attack of mania, had completely forgotten all that went before it—her child, her husband, her married name—but in all other respects was perfectly sane, and with care might become entirely so. Mr. Meynell was devoted to her, and only asked to be allowed to take care of her for the rest of her afflicted life. Well, I didn't force myself on them, you may be sure. I went to the wedding—I thought it the right thing to do, somehow—and went back as I came, never to set eyes on the poor lady again till I heard her call on her dead husband, John Archdale, and fall dying at my feet."

The tender-hearted old General ended his story in his pocket-handkerchief, while Eustace held out his hand to Meynell, who clasped it fervently. One look shot from one face to the other; a look of recognition of the unspoken dread they had shared between them, of thankfulness for this great and unexpected deliverance. And that was all that ever passed between them, then or thereafter, on the subject of those terrible days.

Euphrosyne kept her unblinking, black, malicious eyes fixed on the two for a moment longer, then lazily erected herself, and rose to her full height before them all.

"Now, gentlemen, is there anything further you want with me? I should really be obliged by knowing how much longer you intend to occupy my room. Come," turning sharply on Edric, "are you going to take me to prison or not?"

"I should uncommonly like to do so," was his candid reply. "I mean to settle accounts with your blackguard agent Hudson, or whatever you call him, the next time I come across him. If you'll tell me where to find him, I don't mind letting you off."

"It's a bargain," she said, with perfect composure. "The address of my next letter to him will be 'La Probidad, Calle O'Reilly, Havana.' We have business connections in Cuba who may prove useful."

"Does she mean her husband? Have we let the scoundrel off?" asked Meynell, in an undertone of Eustace.

"I suppose so," he replied, in the same tone. "But what should you have done with him if you had got him?"

A knock at the door interrupted them. The manager of the hotel wished to speak to Captain Poynter, who accordingly departed, leaving a somewhat embarrassed party behind him.

Euphrosyne was the exception. She lounged indifferently to the window, opened it, and deliberately drew in a long white scarf.

"My signal to Morris," she explained, carelessly. "I suppose he had some difficulty in making it out through the fog, he was so long in answering it. He is safe and away by this time." And, in spite of herself, she gave a sigh of relief.

"He can be got at again if we want him," Eustace was provoked into remarking; "and there is sufficient evidence to warrant a charge of conspiracy against you both."

She bowed in acquiescence. "Certainly, if you can get him—hardly against me alone. None at all, if the party most interested refuses to come forward."

She was looking hard at the banker as at an ally, with a steady, confident gaze.

He moved restlessly in his chair. His eyes were angry, but his mouth was compressed into gravity.

"You deserve punishment—the severest the law can inflict," he said, in a low, repressed tone. "I am only thinking whether I have the right to inflict it on you at the cost of such pain to others as the public telling of your story would cause. I put away from me all thoughts of unchristian private vengeance, and for my part forgive you."

"Especially as there is nothing to be got by doing anything else," she interpolated, irreverently. "But as a public duty, you would like to have me hanged or whipped, would you not? So! Here is Captain Poynter and his policeman! Send me away to gaol, then!"

It was Edric, but not the policeman. The manager had considered the presence of that functionary to be detrimental to the character of

the hotel, and had begged that he might be dismissed as soon as possible.

"So I'm going to send him off, if nobody here wants him?" he inquired, looking round for instructions.

No one spoke. "I think I must be going," observed Sir John, in a flutter, suddenly recollecting the lateness of the hour and his engagements. "Glad to have met you, though," shaking hands with Oliver. "I've rather made a point of keeping out of sight of all of you, but now I hope we may meet again. Good-day, good-day," to the Vicar and Mr. Paramount; "good-day," sharply and with a curt nod to Madame Girard, who returned him a magnificent sweeping curtsey. Then he bustled off, followed by Mr. Paramount, who had been longing to go for the last quarter of an hour, but who had not quite known how. He imitated Sir John's brevity in his farewells, but was not allowed to escape as easily. Euphrosyne held out her hand, which he could not refuse to take, though he shivered with distaste.

"Give my love to your dear little girl," she said, holding him with her great mocking eyes. "Remember what I told you. It is a case for a clever surgeon, not for the old woman's treatment she has had. You will take better care of her for the future?" He winced and she laughed, and, with a parting pressure that set him flushing pink with embarrassment, tossed him away as it were disdainfully, and he too departed. Edric, mindful of Hester's injunction to "Come back and tell all about it," was preparing to follow.

"Stop!" cried Euphrosyne, imperatively. "I am become weary of you all. You do not amuse me any longer, and I am determined to make an end at once. Not from fear of you. Not one of you all dare lay a finger on me," and she threw her head back and folded her arms defiantly.

"Impudent hussy!" muttered Meynell between his teeth, but did not accept the challenge.

"I have taken good care to make myself safe, but the game is lost," and she made an impatient motion with her dusky hands as if throwing a hand of cards face upwards on the table. "It was my husband's fault; or mine for letting him disobey me. Twice he has done so, to his own ruin. Once when he paltered with you"—speaking to Meynell—"instead of insisting on open acknowledgment of his rights and the immediate possession of the property, and again when he let you live to destroy us," shaking a forefinger at Edric. "This is your day, and so I warned him. I felt the evil was at hand, though we thought you safe on the other side of the world. Ah! if I could have done the work myself!"

Mr. Meynell listened aghast, and Edric began to feel creepy.

"I had the game still in my hands when you came in," she said to Eustace. "But I knew there was another to follow you, and if another—*he* meant ruin. Then he came, and I threw up the deal.

Do you know, for one moment, I thought of ending the game once for all. It was so pleasant to think of you all standing round me dead. Murdered in your midst! And the fright, and the scandal, and the policeman going off—not with me; and the distress of the manager here—he is an uncivil wretch; and the histories in your journals to-morrow! But I thought I should not be there to enjoy it all, and so I held my hand. Now I think, instead of myself, I will make an end of your blindfold blunderings; they amuse me no longer. That will pay me best, too. Morris is the pursebearer, and, now he has left me, I shall have to follow him, and that idiot of a manager will have me settle with him before I leave; and there will be my travelling expenses, and my last little purchases"—she checked the list off on her dusky fingers—"one hundred—two hundred," she said to herself. "Ah! but that is too miserable for a great millionaire prince. It would disgrace the name of Meynell, so shabby an offering to the memory of a mother. Let us say five—unless you would like to make it a thousand."

"Are you speaking to me?" demanded Meynell, irate and astonished. "You don't expect one sixpence of my money, do you? Not one sixpence! Pay you—you audacious, shameless, swindling adventuress! You may be thankful to get off as you are doing. And I hope"—with a desperate struggle back into his ordinary manner—"that this may be a lesson to you, and the turning-point in your life, if you rightly use it; and that gratitude for the mercy shown you may incline your heart ——"

She snapped her fingers in his face deliberately.

"You don't expect any such thing; and you don't care if I starve or hang, so long as I get out of your way. So I will. Pay me well, and you have seen the last of me. On the faith of Euphrosyne!" and she raised her hand with dramatic solemnity.

"But why? Why?" protested Meynell, distracted at her persistence. "What should I get by it?"

"Ah! now that is business-like and rational," she said, nodding with satisfaction. "What shall you get by it? The worth of five hundred pounds, every penny. First, you dispose of me for ever. Second, I hand over to you some interesting family relics and papers confided to me by your lamented mother. Third, I give you the answer to the puzzle that has been vexing all your souls, and tell you how your elder brother came to be produced and acknowledged. Lastly, I will sign my name to anything you please. It may be useful in case Morris ever attempts to try the same trick again on his own account with any others of the family. He might, but I can make you safe against him."

She spoke slowly and weightily, and let each word tell. The others were not surprised to see a look of interest dawn on the banker's face as he frowningly listened. He had started from his chair in his first high indignation, and now began to pace the room

thoughtfully, absorbed in some mental calculation. He came to a stand in front of Euphrosyne at last.

"I will give you two hundred pounds for your information, not one farthing more, and not that unless it appears to be worth it."

She drooped her eyelids and lifted her chin in contempt, studying him sharply all the time. He was in hard earnest, she saw. "Good!" she said suddenly, holding out her hand as if to strike it on the bargain. "These friends of mine shall see fair play." Both the others were too curious to hear what she would say next, to protest against the description.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"HOMMAGE A EUPHROSYNE."

THE day had darkened to night, and the candles on the mantelpiece had burned low during their interview. Euphrosyne rang the bell and demanded fresh ones. "And my chocolate," imperatively. She drew up her large chair to the hearth, and stretched out her gold-embroidered slippers to the blaze luxuriously.

"Sit down," she requested Eustace; "and you"—to Edric—"just open the drawer there, and take out my writing-case."

He obeyed, finding a gorgeous papier-maché concern, as little suggestive of correspondence as anything holding stationery could look. Some sheets of grey-lined paper slipped out, and, as he replaced them, he recognised with a shudder the same faint, sickly scent that had clung to his fingers twice before. There was a gilt and glass penholder, with a bent pen, and, after some search, a penny bottle of ink; but Eustace produced his pencil in preference.

"You will write my story down, and I will sign it. I do not apologise for the trouble; it will repay you."

The chocolate came in a dainty silver service, and she sipped it meditatively, as if arranging her ideas, and then began fluently enough:

"I met Lady Valeria Meynell for the first time in the early spring of 1880 at Cannes. I had gone there to recover some wages due to me by my mistress, la Vicomtesse d'Escarel. I had been her maid when she was a child, and had done her good service many a time; kept her secrets and helped her in her troubles. She had married twice. The first time to a young English sailor who had taken her silly fancy. She loved him frantically, as she did everything else, before she married him, and hated him as frantically after. So—he died. Her next marriage was different. Her father brought her—a young, beautiful widow—to Paris, and arranged a marriage for her with the son of his old friend the Comte d'Escarel. Ah! What a difference! No more caresses and worship; no more pretty tyrannies. The Vicomte was a man of stone and iron; a grim, rigid

puritan; and she trembled before him. He hated me; and when I was ill and dying left me in hospital, and took her away to Cannes. I believe in my fever I refused to go with them, and implored to be left in Paris. It was the place of my destiny, so my stars had told me. So they let me die there, as they thought; and she nearly died of terror when I found her again. She would give me money, and could meet me secretly now and then, she said; but that was all she dare do for me.

"It was enough. I had married since we parted. My husband was in the States, and I must await his return somewhere, making the best use I could of the time till we should meet again. So I got her to introduce me to her friends in Cannes as a deserving poor woman who mended lace and was knowing in toilet secrets. I mended lace—and other things too—and made friends for myself, picking up here and there bits of knowledge that might be useful some day. Nerve-troubles were the fashionable maladies in the semi-invalid society just then. It began to be whispered that I possessed a cure for headaches and sleepless nights—a knowing little secret not to be discussed with the doctors. Never mind the stage-effects I got it up with. The patient who wore one of my magnetised crimson scarves tied over her brow, and submitted herself to my treatment unresistingly, most certainly *did* lose her headaches, and, as certainly, *did* sleep, and occasionally talked in her sleep, too, in a fashion that might have astonished her, if she had ever guessed it. One day I met the rich English widow, Lady Valeria Meynell. I mended some lace for her—nothing else. *She* didn't want her eyebrows accentuated or her complexion adjusted to the shade of her last new gown, but she was nervous and low-spirited, and her friends persuaded her to try Madame Girard's magnetic cure."

"You dared to practise on her?" demanded Oliver, with kindling eyes. Euphrosyne dismissed the interruption as frivolous.

"I got her own history from her own lips—of course I did—and cured her, too, for a time. Then I set to thinking what I could do with my knowledge. At first I hoped to find something wrong with the first marriage, that it might interest the Meynell family to know. For a time I had actually a fancy that the lover might prove to be the good respectable Sir John we had here just now! Ridiculous, was not that?" with a smile at her hearers which no one returned.

"As that would not do, I began to think of the son. You know that was her weak point. It took no conjuring to find that out."

"I had never guessed or heard of it!" sighed her son.

"He was alive, or so she had told me, and she was bent on finding him. Well, I would find him for her. I called on her in England with news from America next summer. It was so simple! She had no knowledge of having breathed a word to me or any living being on the subject, and I startled her into believing me. Her son, I said, had been adopted by a wealthy English lady, and his foster-mother

had sent me from her death-bed with the tidings. I went and came from time to time with news of him, good or bad as the occasion seemed to require, and—I see what you want to know—yes, I did get a fair supply of money. But then I wanted it all. Morris was trying his luck as clerk in a French wine-merchant's, then. He got good pay, but he spent it all again. Then he went to sea for a short time. Then he was a waiter in a restaurant. Wherever he went he picked up money in handfuls somehow, and then stopped working to spend it all again. I did not care; I had my grand plan working in my head, and he was no use to me as yet. At last my lady got suspicious and restless—I have you to thank for that," in an aside to Mr. Stannard. "She wouldn't see me, and things grew serious, though chance befriended me when she was carried out of your way down to Rivington. You didn't follow her, and I guessed how long her patience would hold out, and at the right moment sent her Mr. Edric Poynter's photograph."

"That's false! I haven't had one taken since I was a small child."

"Ah, what a pity I cannot show it to you! It was such a good likeness."

"I suppose you mean this," said Meynell, searching in his pocket-book, and producing the photograph he had shown to Eustace. "I thought it was taken from life."

"No, only from this," stretching back to the table and picking up the miniature-case. It held the same faded old portrait she had once shown to Elsie in Lavender Row. She looked at it and passed it to Eustace, whom she persisted in regarding, as her husband had done, as her special ally. "Do you see any likeness?"

He looked from it to Edric. "A slight one. Yes, now I look at it again, a striking one." He passed it on to Meynell, who assented grudgingly.

"That was a convincing proof, you see. The original must be somewhere, and Lady Valeria was frantically impatient to be brought face to face with him. That was a difficulty, was it not? Again chance helped me, and kept her at Rivington, while I searched London far and wide, till within a few days of her return I saw the very face I wanted at London Bridge Station. You were in a first-class compartment and I had got into the next compartment (I had not a first-class ticket, so I could not join you), and I tried with all my might to listen from the window to what you were saying. A chance word was blown to me while we waited outside Cannon Street. Then I stopped you on the platform at Charing Cross, and had a look at you, and then followed you. It was my luck, I said, when I saw you turn away from Mrs. Damien's door, and found you were seeking her."

"How did you do that?"

"Asked at the shop where you went to make inquiries, of course,

and picked up the card you threw away in the Gardens. So I followed you still, and read your face as well as your hand, and made you tell me a great deal more than you ever guessed. Then I made my plan. You should be 'Jack.' Lady Valeria should leave all her fortune to you, and when she died, Morris should step into your place and inherit. But it needed to be carefully arranged. I had got you safe, and knew where to find you, and how to bring you back when I wanted you. That was the first step."

"If I had guessed it! That was the meaning of all your inquiries about Monk?"

"Perfectly. A name selected almost at random from amongst your officers. Anything to keep you on view and unsuspicious. You know how it succeeded, and I thought it only remained for me to persuade her to make a will in favour of Stephen Magrath, of somewhere in America. But I found your English law was too much for me. I went to see a lawyer, and he frightened me. There would be endless difficulties in my way; proofs of identity required; certificates—more than I could imagine. So I thought I would content myself with a letter that her son would regard as a sacred trust. She wrote it as strongly as I could wish. I had to get it for Morris to deliver after her death, which I knew was not far off."

"You did!" asked Meynell, with sudden affright.

"It was no doing of mine. She died quite too soon for my wishes. One day I found she had been taken out of my reach altogether; taken to Folkestone, where you and she might meet any day. Why did you not go as I told you? You had warning in plenty."

"I couldn't. And if I had known why you wished it, I wouldn't have left on any consideration," was Edric's response.

"So you got the letter and suffered for it. Not as I could have wished, though. Ah, that idiot husband of mine! Our lines of life travel apart for one day—one brief day; and in that day he should have made you safe for ever. I warned him of it. The chance once past, harm to you meant danger to me. Tell the rest yourself; I know nothing of it. I have done now." She pushed her chocolate from her, shut her lips tightly, dropped her hands in her lap, and sat, her confidences at an end, speechless and imperturbable.

Mr. Meynell had got his money's worth, all but the signature. It took him and Eustace some little time longer to put the notes of the narrative into a form which should be a brief acknowledgment of the fraud, and the part which at her suggestion her husband had played; during which Euphrosyne gave no sign except a glimmer of her bright watchful eyes through their long eyelashes at Edric, waiting impatiently enough for the end of the scene.

"Now, you may sign this," Mr. Meynell spoke at last. He read the paper over to her carefully.

"Gospel truth, every word. Accept my testimony," she murmured, affecting to smother a yawn.

A chambermaid was summoned as witness, and Euphrosyne, rising majestically, affixed her small involved signature. "Euphrosyne ——" and then paused.

"Which of them?" she asked, graciously offering a choice of surnames.

"Your husband's," said the Vicar.

"I am not sure which that is. One name is as good as another to Morris."

"Your own, then."

"That I never knew at all," was the disconcerting response. "Girard-Beltran," she at last selected, and affixed it with a long straggling noose, like a rat's tail, at the end. The witnesses signed, the chambermaid was dismissed, and the business was ended. Edric departed right gladly, Euphrosyne standing on the hearth in her glittering gown, bowing him adieu with the air of a queen concluding an audience.

Mr. Meynell detained the Vicar one moment while he put the promised cheque into Euphrosyne's hands. She looked at the signature with sparkling eyes. "Ah, there is use in a name like that!" she cried. "How good it looks, and how respectable! I will fling it in the face of that idiot manager."

Oliver paused again on the door-step, and fumbling in his pocket extracted a thin little book which he laid on the table, and then left her alone.

She made use of her solitude to contemplate the cheque a moment longer affectionately, then picked up the small tract and examined it curiously. She read it all through attentively, looked at it all round with a puzzled face, as if trying to arrive at the motive of the gift; finally, taking up the discarded penholder, she inscribed, in a neat flourish across the title-page:

"*Hommage à Euphrosyne*" *de la part de*
Son humble Serviteur,
OLIVER MEYNELL,

carefully copying the signature from the cheque.

Then she stuck it prominently in the chimney-glass for the edification of future visitors and the further discomfiture of her foe the manager.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"ROSES SHALL BE WHERE ROSES WERE."

"Is that the end of the story?" asked Randolf. He knew the truth at last. Eustace had had his way; and Lord Altcar, with low voice and averted face, had given him in brief the facts of his withheld inheritance. He had listened with a curious, sad, half-indifferent smile, his eyelids wearily dropped over his bright blue eyes, making no sign at first except to stretch out a long wasted hand, and

let it fall on his father's knee with a half-deprecating, half-caressing motion.

"So Altcar is actually mine?" the faint voice went on. "It seems odd to think of. Not that I shall want much of it, or for long. This room for a few weeks, or days, more, and then a corner in the churchyard over there."

"Don't, lad, don't!" pleaded Lord Altcar, clutching the thin hand in his great powerful grasp.

"I wish I had known it, too," he went on meditatively. "It would have been almost better to have told me when I came of age."

"So Eustace said, but I wouldn't listen to him. He wanted you to know it as soon as he did. Perhaps I ought to have trusted you, but I feared—I knew how the telling of a secret is as the letting out of water; first a drop, a driblet, then a stream that no man can stem. I've blundered throughout somehow, and I can take the sharpest words you like to give me, for I have done you wrong—but it was for her sake."

"Father!" looking up astonished. "You don't think I wanted the money? Don't you see I could have made some arrangement—signed some deed that should have set it right again?"

His father only answered by a sigh that was a groan, and hid his face.

"It's not too late now;" and Randolf's weak voice rose with a shade of animation. "It was money that was left to me—not land or anything he could tie up for another generation. I don't want poor little Esmée to be a great heiress either. I wish you'd tell me what I can do. I must make my will in any case—and at once. There's little time enough to waste."

Lord Altcar fairly fled from the room, leaving the two brothers together.

They were not in Randolf's old beloved den in the highest gable-nook of the house, nor yet the great guest-chamber which he and Amy had occupied before, but a disused sitting-room adjoining the library, that the boys had considered their own special domain in days of yore. There was still over the high mantelpiece a trophy of whips, fishing-rods and foils; some amateur attempts at bird-stuffing under glass, on a high shelf; and the cupboards round the walls contained vestiges of sundry youthful arts and industries. Eustace had routed out some discarded tools for wood-carving, and was at work copying a damaged fragment of oak pannelling from the church. Lady Altcar's reading-table and shaded lamp stood in the broad window, where her wheeled chair had its accustomed place, and Mary Liddell's work-frame and basket of silks was near. It seemed a centre of home comfort and interests, rather than a chamber of death, as it too certainly was. None knew it more surely than Randolf himself, from the day when they brought him home and laid him there.

"Poor old Pater! he takes it hard! I hadn't a notion that he cared for me so. I'm glad I haven't known this all these years, too. I'm such a forgetful fellow—who can tell the mischief I mightn't have made. No fear of that now for the future. You poor old fellow, don't be so cut up about saying good-bye to me. Won't you believe that it's better that I should leave off while my happiness lasts, rather than outlive it all, as I might do? Who knows ——"

Here the doctor was announced, and a cheery young surgeon from Ingildyke, a new comer, to whom Randolph had taken a sudden fancy, came in, fresh and rosy from his ride through the frosty air, and Eustace left him with his patient.

During his visit he maintained the hopeful, capable air that was potent tonic in itself to more than half his patients; but outside with Eustace, it faded away to an expression of grave pity.

"Poor fellow! Is he anxious about himself, Mr. Stannard? I notice that he never asks me a single question now. It was a relief at first, but may mean that he has made up his mind to the worst."

Eustace nodded speechlessly, but his eyes appealed for a word of comfort. It did not come.

"Those great strong muscular men are always the hardest hit, and Colonel Stannard had gone through enough to slay a giant before he gave in. He brought the seeds of fever with him from Egypt, and instead of coming home and putting himself under treatment, like a reasonable being, he tells me he went off on a fortnight's leave, travelling day and night to see Mrs. Stannard in some stuffy, undrained little hole on the Riviera; and, when he collapsed there, insisted on his man bringing him back to England in the heart of the winter's cold. It was madness—sheer madness. Many a worn-out old farm-hand has a better chance in a struggle with death than he."

Eustace assented sorrowfully. The doctor had yet another word to say.

"I could have hoped something from his temperament. He ought to be, judging by his looks, one of those men filled with the love of life and its pleasures who cling hard to it, won't give in or believe that the end has come. They meet the doctor half-way, just as the opposite natures side with Death against him. Colonel Stannard doesn't want to live. Why is that?" And the doctor's sharp eyes fixed themselves on the other's face.

Eustace only answered with a sad look. The words had set before him a truth that he had been dimly guessing at for some time and yet turned from as incredible. Randolf, of all men! He to give up life in disgust and heart-sickness! What could it mean? "Better to leave off now while my happiness lasts." Did he fear to outlive it? Who could tell?

Not Amy, apparently. She poured forth her soul on tinted scented sheets of foreign post, besieging Eustace for daily, hourly reports; al-

most indignant with him for not fixing precisely the date of her husband's recovery. "I can make no plans as it is now," she bewailed, "and I should like to know whether we may accept the Maxwells' offer of their house for next season. They *must* know before January. It's very trying not to know what to look forward to. Nobody knows what it has cost me to be so far away from all I love; but it is not for my own sake alone that I must study my health a little. Another winter at home, after all I went through in the summer, would have killed me, I believe. To indulge my feelings now, and fly home to my dearest Randolf, would be mere selfishness. Besides, I feel bound to the Maxwells. It was quite on my account they made up the party to come here. How could we tell that the campaign was going to end so soon?" she pleaded injuredly; "or that Randolf would have been so foolish as to follow me here? I know I can trust him to you, dear brother. That is my one comfort. We found Mentone horribly dull, and shall try Nice. The Maxwells know the very best people in the English set there, and the shops are too exquisite."

No; Amy had no idea.

He watched his brother with new anxiety the rest of the day. It passed as usual. At the accustomed hour Lady Altcar was brought in and placed where her eyes could rest on her son's face, and his hand reach her caressingly now and then. He gave her his customary cheery report of himself, trying in vain to evade the clear, sad eyes that he felt read the truth unerringly in his face. Then Mary Liddell came in and read aloud to them, and Lord Altcar tried to drop in casually with some small news of the day, and hurried out again, not trusting his voice.

During all this, Randolf dozed or watched them interestedly, or now and then tried to talk in his old off-hand fashion, and that was the most trying of all. The second post brought Amy's regular letter and a box of Nice flowers—roses, mignonette and carnations, with which Randolf strewed his bed, "for the little one to see;" and presently Miss Stannard made her appearance, smiling and rosy, blue-ribboned, with the freshest of pink cheeks and white frocks, in the arms of proud old Aunt Mamie.

Her appearance at Altcar was the result of sundry minute but unobtrusive perquisitions into the nursery arrangements that resulted in Lord Altcar's hurrying up to town one morning and returning at night in triumph with Aunt Mamie, and cashiering promptly the elegant creature in authority, who departed in a genteel fury, threatening an action at law forthwith for causeless dismissal, and appealing to all the noble families whose scions she had reared to bear witness to this injustice. So good old Auntie reigned in her stead, and Baby Esmée grew big and handsome and saucy, the one great joy of her father's life. She sat on his bed picking up blossom after blossom with her tiny fingers, and holding them up to him with funny little noises of admiration or inquiry. They saw him suddenly

stretch out his hand for one, and hold it thoughtfully, smiling. Then he looked round for Eustace, and seemed about to speak, but checked himself, and surrendered the orange bud again to Esmée's impatient clutch. "I want my father," he said, as if he were continuing the same train of thought.

Randolf's request to his father was an urgent one. The telegraph was set to work, and the carriage met the last train and brought back one of the partners in the firm of Lord Altcar's London solicitors.

He stayed all next day, and not till the afternoon of the next did they learn the result of his visit. "I've made my will," Randolph announced to all assembled around him. "It really wasn't such a formidable business, after all. My father and the lawyers had arranged all the technicals beforehand, I had nothing to do but listen and sign. I've left you something, Mary; I can't understand why you never got that Egyptian jewellery I sent you, or the mother her embroideries. Amy got the other things safe enough. What do you think I have left you, Eustace, as a wedding present? I hope you won't decline it," and he toyed restlessly with his little girl's downy curls. "What do you think of this wee woman? Will you and your Rose be her guardians? I don't want to slight her mother," he went on anxiously, "but she is too young, and says herself the burden of responsibility is too much for her. No; I don't think she will grudge you the charge. You once promised me to take care of *her*. She has plenty of friends of her own now. Take my little child instead, Eustace—you and your Rose."

"When the time comes," was all Eustace could say.

Esmée stretched out her baby arms to him from her throne on the pillow, a white blossom crumpled up in her fat white fingers.

"There! Do you see what she is giving you?" and Randolf gave a shaky laugh. "What I put in her sash yesterday. It comes to help me to broach the subject. An orange-blossom! Eustace, when are you going to get married?"

"The first week in January."

Randolf shook his head impatiently. "Why should you wait so long? I did look forward to being at your wedding, old boy. The New Year! when I shall hardly see the old year out! Are you waiting on my account? What sense is there in it?"

It *had* been on his account, though they could not tell him so.

"Let it be sooner," he pleaded, with his old impetuosity. "Can't you get a special license? Can't it be to-morrow, or next week?" He stopped, sighing impatiently, and said no more till they were alone. "Can't it be done? Promise me to go and talk it over with Rose. I want to see you married before I die."

Eustace had plenty of business at St. Fridolin's, if excuse were needed. Mr. Renwick was now in charge while his exchange with Eustace was being effected, and the two had much to consult upon. So up to town he went right willingly.

Randolf beguiled the time of his absence by settling the details of the ceremony. "Tell Rose I want her in all her finery," he had said —"gown, bridesmaids, and all; and a wedding-breakfast, mother. No shirking or stinting on my account. Triumphal arches and bonfires and illuminations at night. Eustace need not protest, or try to get out of it now—now that he is really the heir," he ended, under his breath.

They promised him all he wished; and he lay with flushed cheek and shining eyes counting over the guests that were to be bidden, and the possibility that he might be "made up just for the day," till far into the night.

Eustace was at his bedside by morning's light, and found him many degrees worse than when he left him.

"What does she say?" he asked, so wearily as to seem almost indifferent.

"Next week, if you wish it."

"That is as long as I can wait," was all he answered.

So it comes to pass that four days later, when the first snow is falling, Altcar holds a mighty gathering under its white-hooded roof-tree.

Randolf, awake and eager from early dawn, is being dressed by his servant and Eustace, slowly and with long intervals of rest between each stage. He has had to give up the notion of rising from his bed, and has to content himself with being trimmed and shaved and put into his scarlet tunic and sash.

"The world is making itself white for your wedding," he said, laughing and looking at the heaped-up window-sill.

"And you look like the bridegroom," answered Eustace, adjusting his white pillows, and covering the bed with a white bear-skin.

Four stalwart labourers enter at the first stroke of the bell from the great white tower of St. Anne's, and lift the light bed through to the library, converted into a temporary chapel. Its deep recesses are heaped with tall white lilies and green foliage; and Aunt Mamie, coming in, resplendent and picturesque, adds yet another touch of bridal whiteness as she places on his coverlet his little baby daughter. At the far end a small congregation is already gathered: neighbours and tenants; Mrs. Bates and her subordinates a-flutter with satin ribbons and flowery breast-knots; Mrs. Goodliffe, from St. Fridolin's, in the stiffest of silk and her real lace lappets.

There is another representative of St. Fridolin's at hand: Mr. Paramount, erect, spruce and dignified, as befits his new position. A private request from his Vicar, a ready assent from the great banker, and the world has changed for him. Mr. Meynell may think it no great boon that he has granted—a modest post with a promise of a pension on retirement—but to the disappointed little man it means position, independence, security—all the lost household gods of his good days brought back in triumph and set up in their shrines once again. He is part of Meynell, Meynell and Mott

now, and young Mr. Ebden has no power to vex his spirit more. Elsie leans on his arm, a little shrinking figure in white fur and cashmere. She has longed for and dreaded this day. It is a kind thought of Rose's to bring her here. She and Edric must meet sometime, and the occasion will help to pass off any embarrassment. So she is there, starting at every footfall, and longing to hide herself from all eyes, till Mary Liddell comes to greet and reassure her, and find her a shadowed nook whence she can see, herself unseen. Mary is in shimmering satin and soft grey feathers, like the meek domestic little dove that she is, looking shy and becomingly fluttered, as conscious of a personal interest in the coming ceremony, and terribly disconcerted by some confidential reference to her by Mrs. Goodliffe concerning the internal arrangements of the Vicarage—"which I am aware does not look now as it will do when it has a lady at its head"—making Mary blush to the very tips of her slim, grey-gloved fingers, and retreat hastily to receive the new comers. Enter the one bridesmaid—Hester—splendid in velvet and satin of wall-flower tints of orange and brown, with Sir John in full magnificence.

"Full dress! That's three times this year I've had to get into uniform. What do you think a man's made of to stand it?" he has groaned; but Hester is relentless.

Now there is an anxious pause, and the door opens wide. It is to admit Lady Altcar, veiled in white and sparkling with diamonds, on whose lap Mary had laid a bunch of white roses. Eustace guides her in and places her beside his brother's couch; then, followed by another figure in scarlet and gold ("My son's Captain," Mr. Paramount tells everybody within reach, confidentially: "distinguished himself at Kassassin"), takes up his place before the extemporised altar, and awaits his bride.

Then for the last time the great door swings open wide, and, leaning on Lord Altcar's arm, she enters, and with her a sudden burst of wintry sunshine.

"It is a farewell," says Hester. "There is a note of sadness in the very clash of those bells." She is standing in the window of the deserted library, whence a few minutes since she and her companion have watched the departure of the bride and groom on their brief honeymoon. "It is farewell to St. Fridolin's."

"Why not?" says Edric, unsympathetically. "There must be an end as well as a beginning to everything. St. Fridolin's has had its turn of being everybody's first idea. I wonder when *mine* is to come?"

"You are not going to resume that old subject," says Hester, severely. "It's quite time there should be an end to that. You cannot have anything fresh to say."

"But I have. You are bound to marry into the Royal Denbigh some day, you know ——"

"Granted. And then?"

"Brown is going to retire next month. Carroll's engaged to an Austrian Countess. The choice is at last narrowed to me or a subaltern. Hester, you once wanted to take my affairs in hand and set them to rights for me ——"

"And you wouldn't let me. I have not forgotten that."

"Nor I the lesson of pluck and pertinacity you instilled into me then. I'm resolved to act upon it now, and better the instruction. I'm like the drowning man whose life you have saved; you are morally responsible for my future. I don't pretend to be much, but think what you could make of me! Hester, when will you take me in hand for good and all?"

"When you can offer me the command of the regiment." And the bargain is sealed on the spot.

There is an echo of the wedding-peal far away in smoky St. Fridolin's, where up aloft in the cold brief sunshine the bell does its wildest and wickedest, as old Totterdale puts a whole heartful of goodwill into every tug of the rope. The wedding feast, lacking at Altcar, is to be held at the Vicarage. There is a mysterious hint of great doings to come when the bride can take her share in them, but her friends round St. Fridolin's are well content as it is. They have lost their Vicar. The King is dead, but long live the King! Mr. Renwick has made good way amongst them already, and will be the more popular, as he will be a happier man than Eustace has ever been there.

And the pretty story of Rose's work there and her beauty and her marriage will be a short-lived romance, brightening many a dingy life for a day, as do the roses she has sent as her parting gift to all.

Sweet Queen Rose! Fair Queen of Roses! I would fain hold you with my pen-tip awhile longer in my sight ere you pass from me into the Land of Lost Fancies.

In vain, in vain. Fainter and more shadowy grow the dream-forms that have borne me company so long. Edric with his bright boyish smile answering the glance of Hester's bright eyes—Elsie's little wistful face. Even the grey old walls of St. Fridolin's are tottering and melting away with a clang of wedding-bells dying in the air above them. One last smile from a fair face—a handful of scattered rose-petals turning into snowflakes as they fall—and the vision fades and my story ends.

THE END.

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The Argosy

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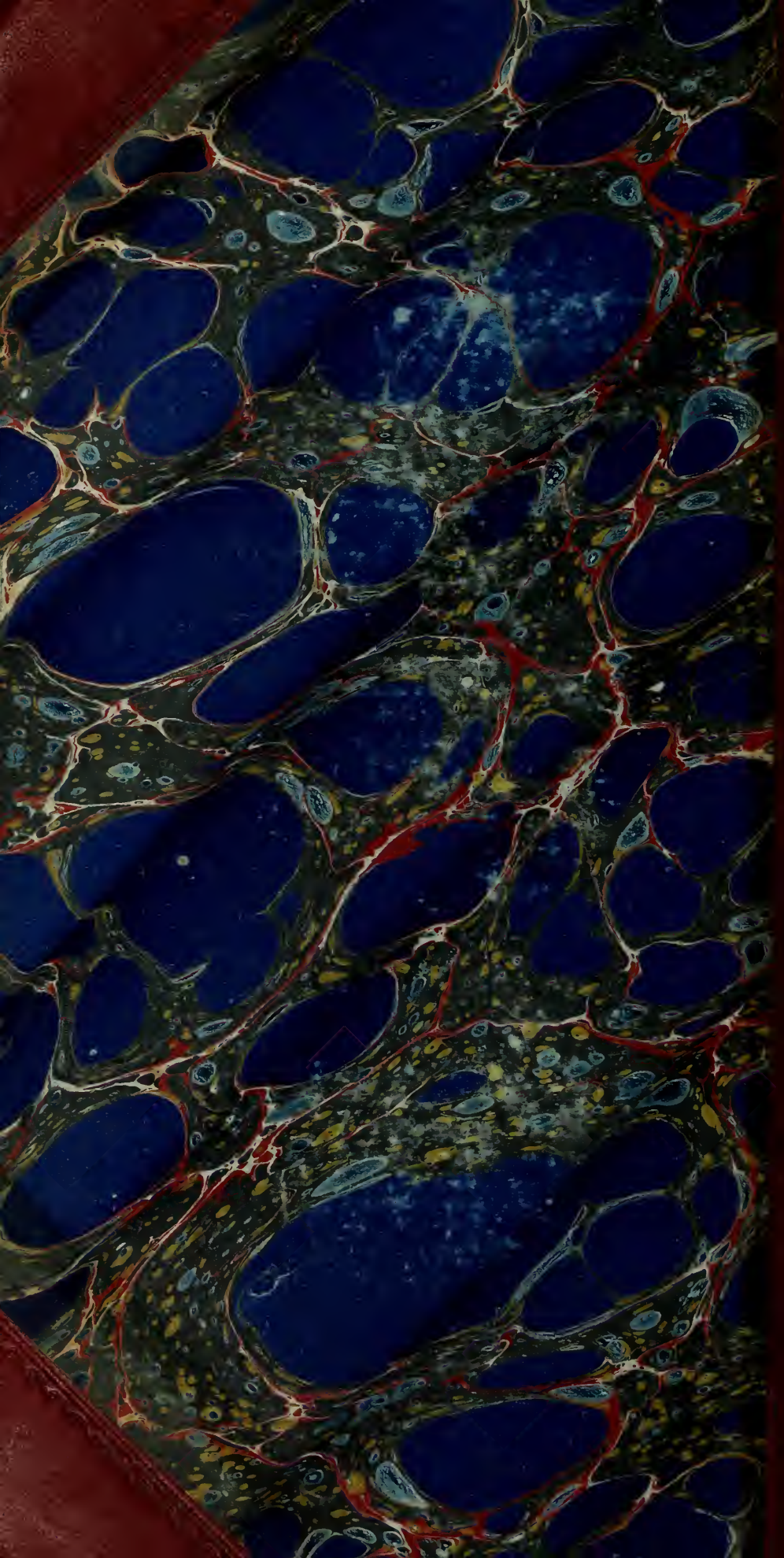
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